COMMUNISM

AND THE

SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN INDIA

A CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

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A Christian Interpretation

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

NOTHING short of a revolutionary shake-up of the entire pattern of Indian life, in both town and village, is taking place today. This is truly a social revolution in that it affects every aspect of society—political, economic, cultural and religious. The movement for national independence was but one of its many expressions. It can be seen at work also in the growing industrialization of the country, in the efforts to abolish the feudal land system, in the growth of large cities and the disintegration of village communities, in the removal of 'untouchability', in the weakening hold of traditional religion and in the search for a new philosophy of life which will satisfy the intellects and kindle the emotions of modern men.

This revolution is due in part to the impact of modern industry on an agricultural economy. But far more significant is the growth of new convictions about the nature of the universe and the meaning of human life. Men and women whose grandparents were taught to accept oppression, poverty and disease as the will of the gods are now convinced that these are to a great extent man-made evils which can be conquered by concerted human effort. New ideals of justice and equality are challenging the old patterns of political authority and economic privilege. The longsuffering poor and exploited have come to realize a new sense of dignity and historical mission. They are determined to rise and collect their due.

Deep undercurrents of this revolution have been undermining the foundations of Indian society for more than a century. Today many political movements are attempting to direct it into channels of their own making. One of the most powerful of these movements is Communism, which claims to give the only correct interpretation of the revolution and has set up a goal towards which it proposes to lead the country.

It is the duty of all thinking citizens to study both the social revolution and the political forces which seek to lead it, if they are to take part intelligently in shaping the future of the nation.

This responsibility falls as much on Christians as on others. Unfortunately, however, most Christians in India today do not seem to be vitally interested in contemporary political life. This was not so a generation or two ago. Indian Christian leaders of that time were involved in the nationalist movement. In quiet but effective ways they participated both in the struggle for independence and in constructive programmes of nation-building. Their enthusiasm was reflected in the life and thought of the Church throughout the country. Things seem to be different today. Although as a people Christians have progressed rapidly in education, social standing and material possessions, they have become more introspective and isolated. They are little concerned with the new economic and social forces that are causing so much stir in the life of India and the world at large.

It is not impossible that a religious minority like the Christians in India feels a bit diffident, even imagining itself somewhat unwanted. But such a misapprehension is unfounded, and betrays over-much concern with communal interests. Even more important, it is to misunderstand totally the heavier responsibility for national welfare that rests upon an enlightened minority in a democratic state. The true function of a minority is to be constantly vigilant, to keep alive common interests and concern for social justice, and to remind the government, which is naturally inclined to favour majority interests, that it should serve the national good. When such a minority is committed to the Christian faith, its obligations become all the more significant. It is called of God to serve as a spokesman to the nation, insisting on standards of right and wrong, safeguarding the worth of the human individual, and preventing eternal, spiritual values from being lost sight of in the present anxiety to make rapid material progress.

In the light of these considerations this book has been written. The authors are convinced that the social revolution is the most dynamic factor in our contemporary national life. They are convinced also that this revolution, if given the proper direction, can contribute to the economic and social emancipation of millions who live under conditions of almost indescribable poverty and injustice. As Christians they feel duty-bound to attempt to interpret the revolution and the political

movements associated with it today. They have dealt at length with Communism because they believe that it represents both a challenge and a threat to the country as a whole.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first analyzes Communist theory and practice and the second suggests a possible democratic alternative. The major contention is that a clear distinction should be drawn between Communism and the social revolution. To identify the one with the other is to be blind to the nature of the revolution and to strengthen the cause of Communism. Social justice is the true end of the revolution, but Communism is diverting it from this objective towards a false goal. Thus Communism betrays the social revolution and turns it into a new oppression. Yet it is not enough simply to oppose Communism. Those who seek a true social revolution leading to justice, equality and freedom must discover the means by which it can be brought about.

The third section takes up special questions arising from the Communist challenge to Christian faith. Communism as a total system of theory and practice poses certain deeply "religious" problems which the Christian can neglect only at grave peril to his own faith.

The disparity in the styles of different chapters is due to the fact that they have been written by various authors. The contributors are James P. Alter, C. Arangadan, J. Russell Chandran, P. D. Devanandan, Leonard Schiff and M. M. Thomas. In presenting this interpretation they speak as individual Christians and not as the representatives of any Christian organization.

This volume has been prepared under the auspices of the Committee for Special Literature on the Indian Church and Social Concerns.

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P. D. Devanandan
M. M. Thomas
for the Committee.

THE APPEAL OF COMMUNISM

COMMUNISM appeals to various types of people in India today. These include the intellectuals, many of whom are unemployed, and students in universities; the workers employed in industrial areas in mills and factories, some as labourers and some as clerks; and more recently the peasants, both petty farmers who scratch the soil for a meagre living and landless farm hands who toil for a miserable pittance. Why does Communism appeal to them? What is it that these different types of people hope to find in Communism?

The peasant

Let us take the peasant population first, because they form the bulk of the people. Communists draw pointed attention to our present iniquitous system of land tenure and win the support of the peasant. The real problem here is that a great deal of arable land is owned by rich landlords. These people do nothing else but collect the rent due on the land, either in cash or in kind, from the tenant farmer to whom they have leased it. They have no other interest in the land except the income they get out of it. It is the tenant farmer who tills the soil, sows the seed, waters the field, and gathers the harvest. Then along comes the landlord and walks off with his rent, which more often than not, because of poor harvest, amounts to almost all that the poor farmer has gained from a whole season's hard labour. What can he do, but borrow money to carry himself through another year? That puts him in the clutches of the *banya*, the money lender, and he is worse off than before.

Landless labourers in the villages who have to hire themselves out as farm workers are still worse off. Theirs is a precarious livelihood; their seasonal wages are so very little that they can afford only the most meagre food and clothing. Rising prices of food stuff and clothing material make living increasingly difficult for them. Added to this, we have had seasons of water scarcity. Irrigation means investment of money and

machinery, and the rich landlords do not care. They will not help; they are not interested in improving the land. Have they a right to own what they do not appreciate?

The Government may help provide irrigation facilities and cheap power, make available expert advice, and even offer agricultural loans, but the tenant farmer is not interested in them because he does not have a stake in the land he tills with the sweat of his brow. All the benefit goes to the rich landlord, making him richer and more powerful. Therefore, something needs to be done to set right the grievous wrong under which the tenant farmer suffers; and something also must be done to improve the living conditions of the landless labourer.

A healthy discontent with one's lot can be the incentive to organized self-effort and ready willingness to avail oneself of offered assistance to self-improvement. Our national government is today waking up to its responsibilities to the rural population. Thanks also to the help we are now able to secure from various foreign sources, plans are being laid, and already set in motion in some places, to tackle the land problem. But the unfortunate thing about it is that many people connected with the Congress Party which is now in power are themselves landlords. They do not see the land problem from the point of view of the tenant farmer and the landless labourer. Therefore matters tend to move slowly, and there is a half-heartedness in the way things are done.

Radical and immediate abolition of landlordism will help in this situation; it would mean a dispossession of all farm lands from those who now own them and a redistribution to people who actually till the soil and work on their farms. The Communists promise to lead the peasant in a struggle for this needed measure. But in doing so they want to work farmers and field labourers into a fury of unrestrained anger for all wrong so long suffered, and to rouse them to revolt and wrest the land out of the hands of the landlords. They fan the flame of class hatred and use the possibilities of mass action to entrench themselves as leaders of the people.

Another reason why Communism appeals to the farmers is that caste prejudices still persist in our rural life. It is true that in recent times, many caste disabilities have been removed by law. Access to public water supply and places of worship,

right of election to public offices and opportunities to education are all now guaranteed. But especially in villages the caste-mind is still a very real thing. It rankles and sours the attitude of the under-privileged, all the more because economic differences in standards of living are invariably associated with caste distinctions. A classless society appeals to the poor and dispossessed in our villages exactly because they would then *belong*, form part of society, find their place in a community.

The industrial worker

What now of the workers in our industrial areas? Most of them had migrated from the villages, and when they started they found the wages and the independence attractive enough. But now conditions have rapidly changed for the worse. With more people coming out of the villages, with frequent wage-cuts, insecurity of employment, and soaring costs of living, the worker finds his lot in town as hard, if not harder, than that of his village cousin. Besides, he has begun to see things in a different perspective. He realizes that his employer's profit is all due to his labour, and that his own wage is infinitely small, compared to the enormous sum of money that is declared profit. While his rich employer grows richer, he is steadily growing poorer. Living in the town, his interests have widened, his needs have become greater, and he has learned to put more value on his own ability and skill.

Not a few workers in industrial areas are town bred. They are of the second and third generation and they are better informed than their fathers and grand-fathers. Some of them served in the Armed Forces during the last war and saw something of the conditions of life in other parts of the world. They resent the injustice of a social and economic order that condemns them to exploitation and deprives them of what is their due by way of more wages, better living conditions, and greater security. It is true that both employers and government have taken some measures to relieve their condition by fixing minimum wages, providing for housing and welfare, preventing incidents of injury in factories and the like. But this is far from satisfactory. They know that what little they have gained has come through organized trade unionism and strikes. They

know that they can claim their due privileges and rights only through more collective bargaining and a show of force.

Here, again, the Communists find greater opportunity than at any previous time in our recent history to give point and direction to this discontent, and to give it form and content by providing the worker with an objective for which to work. Not only does the worker find in the Communist trade union programme a concrete and immediate goal, such as the redressing of some one or other particular wrong through organized action, but he finds in the Party a new sense of fellowship, a close-knit bond of kinship, a *camaraderie* not unlike the caste community to which he once belonged. Such a sense of belonging gives him, on the one hand, a feeling of security and strength, and, on the other, a new awareness of self-importance and personal worth. The faith that the working class is destined to come to power and to bring in a classless society provides him with a powerful dynamic.

If you live in the larger cities and industrial centres you could not have missed the big parades and the mass processions of Communists and Communist sympathisers marching along the main roads and market places, or holding mammoth gatherings with great display of banners and much shouting of slogans. You could not have missed noticing their contagious enthusiasm and joy of life. What does it mean? Obviously the worker now feels that he has something to live for and fight for. He has found a sense of purpose in a life which formerly seemed meaningless and drab.

The student youth

Turning now to the student youth, the most striking thing about the Communist appeal to them is its social idealism. Youth is quick to respond to any cause that stands for what claims to sweep away all that is ugly and mis-shapen in this old world of wrong and suffering, to make it all over again in accord with one's ideals of what *ought* to be. Youth does not pause to count the cost of any revolutionary programme of change; in fact, the very costliness of a project of reform makes a special appeal to youth's ready willingness to pay the price for it. It is the Communist hope of the classless society of transformed men and women, where each would give according to

his ability to the common good and be given according to his needs, which makes a strong appeal.

To the more thoughtful among them, however, there are many more things that matter than just this utopian hope. They are keenly aware of changes that are rapidly overtaking Hindu society. In the "higher" circles of English-educated Hindu society in cosmopolitan centres, and especially in the atmosphere of the modern Indian University, the old order is changing, yielding place to emptiness and void! What takes the place of the caste system in modern Hindu life? If ritualistic observances and traditional religious practices go by default, what is left? If the old social patterns of the joint-family, with its customs of arranged marriages among kindred and the like, are overthrown by the impact of the new individualism, with its social freedom and economic self-interest, what would hold people together and re-integrate national culture? Student youth see their choice as between one or other of the two: spiritual values and material good; religious tradition and secularistic hope; bondage to custom and freedom to act; the present as built on the past, and the future as overleaping the present. Communism appeals to them because it has a this-worldly reference and sees no need for values outside this world. They appreciate its decisive authoritarianism which seems to give them a body of directives covering the entire area of conduct. It sets them on a job of work with precise instructions that save them from the trouble of agonising over decisions.

The intellectual

All this is even more true in the case of the mature intellectuals in our country today. You would probably call them frustrated idealists, in the sense that they have been for years chafing under the control of traditional social restraints and time-honoured religious customs. On the one hand, they see the iniquities of our feudalistic society, and, on the other hand, they see the devastation wrought by modern Capitalistic industries, and they want to rise up and end this night of wrong inflicted by man on brother man. The other-worldliness of popular religion has put iron into their very souls. Many of them again, have been disillusioned by the tragic change that has overtaken the life and outlook of many Congressmen since

Independence. If many of these intellectuals voted against Congress at the last general elections, it was really because they wanted to express strong disapproval of a government that had failed to keep its faith with the starving poor, the debt-burdened peasant, and the under-paid worker. The Congress had done very little during its first term of office for the common man in village and city. What is worse, the Congress government had acquired an unsavoury reputation for corruption, jobbery and nepotism. The Communists actually did something to set things right, and they were, to all intents and purposes, beyond petty corruption and office-hunting. Even when they did plunder the rich, as they did in Telengana, it was to give the loot away to the poor in the neighbourhood; it was never to enrich themselves as individuals.

There is no doubt that the intellectuals in India are attracted to Communism primarily because it stands for a plan of social action. It was for this reason that they joined forces with Mahatma Gandhi in the days of our national struggle. Freedom has brought with it a number of problems which need immediate attention. Basically these many issues revolve on the central need to put positive meaning and content into our new-found freedom. Many intellectuals say that, since countries like Russia and China have made long strides of progress in recent times, putting into effect the communist plan of action, India would be wise to follow their example.

But it is not only as a plan of action that Communism appeals to the intelligentsia; its attraction is also because of its basic ideology. It provides many Hindu intellectuals with what present-day higher education in India fails to give: a unifying principle of thinking about nature, man and history. For, as we shall see presently, Communism is also a philosophic creed, a social theory, something which takes the place of one's religion, a substitute faith. Eventually the Hindu philosophic interpretation of Reality according to the *Vedanta* gives pragmatic sanction to any working faith a *Vedantin* may adopt as helpful in coping with world-life. The *Vedanta* permits the acceptance of a view of life and history confined to this-worldly experience, as distinctly apart from what one holds in regard to the nature of the ultimately Real. Unless there is a complete re-statement of the *Vedanta* whereby the *paravidya* of transcendental experience of

the eternal Brahman is made interdependent with the *apara-vidya* of everyday experience of this world of time and space, the laws governing world-life can be regarded as independent of the Brahman, held without any reference to it at all.

All this would amount to saying that the attraction of Communism to modern intellectuals is due to the fact that religion has lost ground among them. Religion has failed to provide "a frame-work within which to organize their thoughts" about nature, man and history in one of the most challenging days of the story of mankind on earth, when the world is in the throes of a social revolution, a tremendous shake-up of human values, social institutions and political ideals. This is a symptom of a deeper disorder, a confusion about the nature and destiny of man himself. In India this social revolution has been long in coming. Today the under-privileged and the exploited are rising up to claim their share of the increased riches of the land which are still safeguarded by feudal privileges and private interests as the possession of a few. The many still continue to be unjustly bound by traditional caste, race and class customs. The revolutionary claims made by the modern world are these: men's lives are more important than anything else; natural resources, power and wealth should be used for the benefit of everybody; the incentive of all organizations of society, political and economic, should be to further the growth of men and women to find their highest good in true fellowship with one another; and all men should, therefore, have real equality, especially in opportunities for self-development.

What we need first of all to make clear in our thinking about Comunism is this: Communism is not the same as the social revolution which is shaking to the roots our complacent world of traditional values. Nor have Communists brought it about. What the Communists claim to do is to explain the revolution and to have the right of leading it to a successful end. But as it happens they do not have the right explanation, because they leave out of account the decisive factor in human life and history; nor do they give the right lead, because in the process of directing the revolution they destroy the very values of human personality and true community which we want to achieve.

The second thing which we Christians in India must realize

is our responsibility to give point and direction to this social revolution. It has been well said that we "Christians, like every one else, are involved in a historical situation and have to live in conditions which we have not willed. Our faith in God impels us to work for social justice as well as for personal freedom and His righteousness. Our programme for action is directed towards a more just social order than the classless society, which will create for the 'little man' the possibility of the free full life, the life God meant all men to enjoy and by which they may glorify God."

So Communism appeals to us Christians too, in an altogether different way: it challenges our Christian conscience. It puts us some very searching questions. Are we as clear as to our objectives? Are we as earnest and hardworking in our methods? What is our plan for social justice? Are we really dominated by our respect for men and love for truth and justice and freedom? Or are we influenced by our desire for our own security and comfort?

WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

AT the very outset, it is necessary that we know what Communism is, and what it purposes to do. For Communism is both a system of thought and a plan of action. There are many current interpretations of this fighting creed, but the Communist Parties of the world (including the Communist Party of India) maintain that the interpretation of Communist theory and practice given by Stalin is normative. In some ways different from the original exposition of Communism by Marx, Communism as we know it today might well be described as Stalinism. But, of course, Stalinists themselves would not accept this. According to them, they alone are true to Marx and Engels. Nevertheless, it is helpful for us to bear this distinction in mind throughout our discussion.. Our primary concern is with Stalinism and the Cominform (Russian) Communist theory and practice. For it is in this form that we meet it in India.

By no means is it an easy task to understand the basic affirmations of Communism. It involves patient study of certain doctrines, all of which together form a hard and fast system. For the sake of convenience, we shall deal with these doctrines under separate headings.

A philosophy of progress through science

Karl Marx was very much the child of his times. His thinking was conditioned by the contemporary philosophy of nineteenth century Europe. Two dominant ideas held supreme sway in his day: the all-sufficiency of nature and the inevitability of progress. Marx accepted these ideas as gospel truth and built on these assumptions his philosophy of *Dialectical Materialism*. To him, outside of this material world of nature, there was nothing real of which man needed to take account. And whether he liked it or not, the entire natural process, and with it human history, was moving onward in steady progress.

Materialism: Marx affirmed the primacy of matter over

mind and spirit. He did not deny the existence of a non-material, that is, a mental and spiritual world. But he denied that such a world had an independent existence. The material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality, according to Marx. Thought is "merely the highest product of matter"; it is only "the reflection" of material reality. Therefore, if thought is to be true, it must be a true reflection of the material world. Since all thought is about the material world, we can correct what is false in our thinking and reach true conclusions by testing the validity of our ideas in relation to the material world through scientific experiment. Whatever works in practice is true and what does not is false. Marxian materialism holds that the world and its laws are fully knowable, that our knowledge of the law of nature tested by experiment and practice is authentic knowledge, having the validity of objective truth. There cannot be things in the world which are unknowable, but only things which are still not known. Sooner or later they too will be disclosed and made known by the efforts of science and human experience.

Dialectics: Marx also held certain definite views about the nature of matter. First, that nature is "a connected and integral whole, in which things, phenomena, are organically connected with, dependent on and determined by each other." Secondly that everything is in "a state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change." Thirdly, that this movement is not in a circle but an onward and upward movement from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher. Not a simple progress in a straight line but always a spiral, a progress "through struggle of opposites," through negation of negation (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) and through slow quantitative changes bringing on sudden leaps of a qualitative nature. Because of the presence of incessant struggles and negations and sudden leaps, revolution is of the very essence of development in nature.

In his materialism, Marx affirmed his faith in science; and in his dialectics his faith in progress through poverty, war and revolution.

A theory of social development

This philosophy when applied to the social process leads to certain characteristic social theories.

Economic Determinism: According to Marx all human history is determined by the way men make a living, and the way they own the tools for making a living. Everything is determined by the economic system of the times; the government, the art, the science, the social customs, even the religion that men have. "Under the slave-system we encounter certain social ideas, theories, views and political institutions; under feudalism others; and under capitalism others still."

Economics, then, determines everything. Even ideas have no reality apart from economics; they rise and fall with the needs of economics. But ideas play an important role in the development of society, provided they are true, that is, if they "accurately reflect the needs of development" of the economic order. If we know the laws of economics, and the exact needs of economic progress, it is possible to judge what ideas, philosophic or otherwise, prevailing in a particular society are true and what are false. Therefore, it is no more to philosophy that we look for truth (not even about philosophy itself), but to the science of economic history. Communism, thus, claims to be the end of all philosophy.

Historical Materialism: If social progress corresponds to economic development, it is of the utmost importance to understand the law of economic development. Economic order has two aspects: productive forces, the instruments of production; and relations of production (property-relations) into which men enter with one another. As the one changes, the other also must change correspondingly. Productive forces can develop in full measure only when the relations of production correspond to the state of the productive forces and allow full scope for their development. To quote Marx again, "Social relations are closely bound with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces, men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing their way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist."

In the capitalist society of our day, the means of production are in the hands of a comparatively small group of men (capitalists) who thereby exercise power with varying degrees of responsibility, whereas the vast masses of humanity (proletarians)

are forced to sell their labour for wages in order that they may live. The interests of these two groups are continually in conflict, and as the proletariat becomes politically conscious and organised, it strives by every political and legal device, including compromise, to transfer power from the few to the many. This is the theory of the class-struggle; and it is important to realize that the Communists regard it as a sober, observable fact of society. They are convinced that the proletariat is the only class that is really working with the historical process towards progress, because it alone understands what is at stake, and it alone has impetus to secure what history demands, namely the socialization of the means of production. To quote *The Communist Manifesto*, "The proletariat alone is really revolutionary."

A programme of revolutionary action

The central thesis of Communism is that the proletariat-Capitalist struggle, fought to the finish, will bring in the classless society. This is the theme of *The Communist Manifesto* written jointly by Marx and Engels. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class-struggle," says the *Manifesto*. "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that at each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." Thus the class-struggle in the slave-system brought feudalism into being and the class-struggle in feudalism gave birth to Capitalism. Capitalism "has not done away with class-antagonisms; it has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in the place of the old ones." Both Marx and Engels recognize the great role which Capitalism has played in social development by creating more colossal productive forces than did all preceding generations put together. But today Capitalism has become like "the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world which he has called up by his spells." Faced with crises, depressions and other manifestations of its internal contradictions, Capitalism calls for the liberating revolution. What is more, Capitalism has not only forged the weapons that bring death to itself, it has also called

into existence the men who are to wield these weapons—the modern working class—the proletariat. Thanks to Capitalism, again, an organized and politically conscious proletariat faces its oppressors, the Capitalist class. So the *Manifesto* concludes, "What the bourgeois therefore produce above all are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

This idea of the inevitability of socialism through a proletarian victory in the class-struggle is a spur to the working class to intensify the class-war and accomplish its historic mission. So Communism becomes a programme of revolutionary political action.

But why political action? "Political power", says the *Manifesto,* "is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another." The State in a bourgeois society is a dictatorship of the bourgeois, even when democratic in form. "The Executive of the modern State", according to the *Manifesto,* "is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Therefore, in the struggle against the Capitalists, the immediate aim should be the formation of the proletariat into an organized class, the overthrow of bourgeois supremacy, and the conquest of political power by the proletariat. This would mean a dictatorship of the proletariat. When the proletariat has been raised to the position of the ruling class, they will use this political supremacy to abolish private property and socialize it.

Of course, force will be inevitable in this class-struggle, for, says Marx, "force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one." Lenin repeatedly insisted on the need for violent action to replace the Capitalist by the proletarian State. And Stalin underlined this emphasis when he wrote that "the fundamental problems of the working-class movement are solved by force, by the direct struggle of the proletarian masses, their general strike, their insurrection."

A totalitarian movement in power-politics

One party politics: So the working class must gain control of the government. But the entire working class *en masse* cannot be made politically conscious and organised to fight for its rights, without efficient party leadership. The Communists

believe that the party is destined to be *the* leader of the working class in its struggle for power.

The *Manifesto* spoke of the Communists as practically the most advanced and resolute section, because theoretically they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and ultimate general results of the proletarian movement. Lenin went further in defining more clearly the nature, role and organization of the Communists as the "vanguard" of the proletariat. This definition from beginning to end is based on the fundamental principle that the Communist Party is the *only* party that represents the interests of the working class. In fact, Lenin claimed, "We are the Party of a class, and therefore almost the entire class (and in times of war, in the period of civil war, the entire class) should act under the leadership of our Party, should adhere to our Party as closely as possible."

Even when the proletariat is raised to be the ruling class, it can only be under the sole political leadership of the Communist Party to carry out the socialization of property and the social revolution in general. Since the working class has only one Party, there is no justification for the existence of any other party in a State which is under the dictatorship of the working class. On this Stalin has made an authoritative pronouncement. "As to freedom of various political parties, we adhere to somewhat different views. A Party is a part of a class, its most advanced part. Several parties, and consequently freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes, where interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable....But in the USSR, there are no longer such classes. Hence there is no ground in the USSR for the existence of several parties, and consequently for freedom for these Parties. In the USSR there is ground only for one Party, the Communist Party. In the USSR only one party can exist, the Communist Party which courageously defends the interests of the workers and peasants to the very end."

So Communism openly declares that it is a movement for one-party dictatorship. If we define democracy as a political structure in which freedom of opposing parties is recognised, and totalitarianism as its opposite, Communism is anti-democratic and totalitarian in the name of the proletarian revolution.

Principle of Centralism: In fact, the doctrine "one class—one party" is an application of the principle of "democratic centralism" which is the dominant principle of the Communist Party organization. The organization of the Party as the militant arm of the working class gives justification for this. Lenin once declared that he wanted to make the Party "an invincible force through ideological unification." This principle in application has given sanction to an authoritative centre to which all party bodies are subordinated.

Socialism in one country: This policy was first enunciated by Stalin in 1924 and finally adopted by the 14th Party Congress in 1925. As Stalin himself later explained, this policy meant *(a)* that it was possible to build up Socialism by the efforts of one country *(i.e.,* Russia), although *(b)* this country could not consider itself "fully guaranteed against counter-revolution without a victorious revolution in a number of other countries." The practical effect of the first proposition (when combined with the principle of centralism) was to give the USSR and the Russian Communist Party a position of unquestioned leadership in the world Communist movement. The second proposition led directly to the conclusion that it was the duty of every other Communist Party not only to work for a revolution in its own country but also (and this was more important) to defend the interests of the USSR, the fatherland of Socialism, as these interests were defined by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Thus the Communist Party, both nationally and internationally, is consciously organized to think as one mind and to act as one body, disciplined under a central authority whose decision is law.

A humanistic faith

Communism justifies its struggle for political power and its party-dictatorship as integral to its plan to restore man to his true manhood. Marx himself described Communism as "true humanism", for it intends to lead society to a true community, the free sharing of all by every one, thus ushering into history a truly human era. Science and industry, used for the common good, will provide an abundance of benefits. On the banners of that society will be written a new slogan: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

And so, says Marx, history will reach its climax and be stabilised. There will be no struggle, no more thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, for there will be no classes to struggle with each other in this way. The classless Communist society will be the final synthesis of all. Lenin, who was Marx's greatest disciple, has described that final state thus: "And then will democracy itself begin to wither away due to the simple fact that freed from Capitalistic slavery, from the untold horrors, savageries and infamies of the Capitalistic exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to the observance of the elemental rules of social life that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all school books; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, and without the special apparatus for compulsion which is called the state."

In a sense, therefore, Communism may be regarded as a religion, if religion is understood primarily as a plan of fulfilment, of deliverance, of liberation. For Communism certainly offers a frame-work for man's understanding of himself, the world, and his place in the world. True, it has its own teachings about these things. But since it tries to answer these fundamental problems of life Communism does take the place of religion in the minds of its adherents. It certainly calls for a religious faith, because it demands a total loyalty and absolute allegiance. It demands of its party members an implicit faith in a creed, an unquestioning obedience to a programme of action, and an abiding hope in the establishment of the final good of mankind. In all this Communism is consistent in its affirmation of the all-inclusiveness of the world of nature, and man's innate capacity to find self-fulfilment, by his own efforts. Thus Communism sees the source of evil outside man (in the social system) and the source of deliverance within man. It is in this sense that we may speak of Communism as a religion, in spite of its militant atheism.

A total unity

The nature of Communism, of Stalinism really, cannot be understood unless it is seen in its total unity, as a coherent system which is composed of all these things we have described—a philosophy of progress through science, a theory of social development,

a programme of revolutionary action, a totalitarian movement of power-politics, and a humanistic faith. Because it is an integral whole, Communism cannot be understood in parts. It may be that in its initial approach it isolates one or other of these aspects from the whole. But that is part of the Communist strategy, to use one or other of these emphases as the thin end of the wedge and eventually to push in the whole system, the total thing. Communism stands or falls as a totality, and as such it should be accepted or rejected.

THE COMMUNIST ATTITUDE TO RELIGION AND MORALITY

Religion

COMMUNISM regards religion as essentially superstitious and reactionary. This reflects the general nineteenth century tendency to abandon all beliefs that did not stand scientific proof. It sought to give a scientific explanation for the phenomenon of religion, assuming that there was no ultimate truth in religion. As early as 1841 Ludwig Feurbach maintained that belief in God was man's projection of himself upon the universe. Marx developed this theory and taught that the idea of the omnipotence of God was nothing but the fantastic reflection of the impotence of man confronted by nature and his self-created economic and social circumstances. So he wrote, "Man makes religion, religion does not make man."

The Communist attitude towards religion is set forth most clearly in the writings of Lenin. Several of his articles and letters on this subject have been published in a booklet entitled *Religion.* According to Lenin, "Religion is a kind of spiritual intoxicant in which the slaves of capitalism drown their humanity and their desire for some sort of decent human existence..... The oppression of humanity by religion is but the product and reflex of economic oppression within society.... Fear of the blind force of capital....this is the tap-root of modern religion." It is further insisted that religion is used by the exploiting feudalist or capitalist class to inspire the oppressed with a belief in a life after death and dull them to the injustices of this life. "All contemporary religious organisation", says Lenin, "all and every kind of religious organisation Marxism has always viewed as organs of bourgeois reaction, serving as a defence of exploitation and the doping of the working classes." For Lenin there is no question of distinguishing between good religion and bad religion. All religion is equally dangerous. "Marxism is materialism. As

such it is relentlessly opposed to religion." The members of the Third International affirmed unambiguously that atheism was a natural and inseparable part of Marxism. They said, "The fight against religion, the opium of the people, occupies an important position among the tasks of the cultural revolution. This fight must be carried on persistently and systematically. The proletarian power....uses all means at its disposal to conduct anti-religion propaganda." The *Ten Commandments of Communism,* published in 1948 by the League of Young Communists, contains the following: "If you are not a convinced atheist you cannot be a good Communist or a real Soviet citizen. Atheism is indissolubly bound to Communism. These two ideals are the pillars of the Soviet Power."

The Communists believe that religion of any kind is the product of a diseased social order. And they are convinced that when a classless society is established, religion will disappear of itself. For this reason the struggle against religion cannot be carried on apart from the struggle for a classless society. This is the reason also why the Communists at times say nothing publicly against religion. As Lenin insisted time and again, the most important thing for the Communists is to win the revolution. If there is a danger that the Communist attack on religion will offend large numbers of workers and peasants, then the anti-religious propaganda must cease. "To preach atheism at such a time and in such circumstances", Lenin warned, "would only be playing into the hands of the church and the priests." This strategy has guided the Communists ever since the Russian Revolution. During some periods, as for example the first few years after the Russian Revolution, the attack on religion was open and violent. At other times, as in India today, the Communists make no direct statements against religion and even claim to grant complete religious freedom. At no time, however, have they made any compromise with their belief that religion is simply a man-made illusion, and an instrument of exploitation which must ultimately disappear.

In Russia, for several years following the Revolution of 1917, efforts were made to eradicate religion. The League for the Militant Godless was supported by the State. A decree in 1918 granted freedom to profess any or no religion, but the churches and religious societies were denied any juridical rights and the

right to own property. According to the 1918 Constitution, there was equal freedom for religious and anti-religious propaganda. In the amended Constitution of 1936, religious cults were granted freedom to function, but not to propagate. In recent years active persecution of religion has been given up as bad strategy and the Communists now claim that there is full religious freedom in Communist countries.

Whatever the nature of such freedom, it is still assumed that, since religion is anti-scientific and reactionary, active propaganda against it must continue. In Communist countries Dialectical Materialism is taught as a compulsory subject in all schools and colleges, including Christian Theological Seminaries. By such introduction they hope to wean the "bourgeois prejudices." The task of the teacher is explained in the *Uchitelskaya Gazeta* of November 26, 1949 as follows:

> The Soviet teachers must play an important role in carrying out the task of overcoming religious survivals. The teacher entrusted by the Party with the education of youth cannot and must not be neutral to religion or assume a policy of non-interference when believers try to infect children with the poison of religious dope. A Soviet teacher must be guided by the principle of the Party, he is obliged not only to be an unbeliever himself but also to be an active propagandist of Godlessness among others, to be the bearer of ideas of militant proletarian atheism. Skilfully and calmly, tactfully and persistently, the Soviet teacher must expose and overcome religious prejudices in his activity in school and outside of school, day in day out. The problem of the teacher is to educate the young generation in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist Science, in the spirit of a materialist world-outlook which is incompatible with religion.

Subtle attempts are also being made to withdraw from religious groups any right to undertake social services in the name of religion so that religion may be reduced to a purely "otherwordly" occupation which can be explained away as due to unscientific illusions.

If their theory were right, with the progress of Communism religion should have declined. In spite of all Communist efforts, however, there has been no marked decline in the numerical strength of religious communities in Russia or in other

Communist countries. Actually, the number of worshipping Christian congregations in Russia has increased and many new churches have been built in recent years.

There are indeed types of religious experience grounded on illusions. These may be described as "opiate" and "instruments of oppression". But there are other types of religious experience, particularly that of the Christian, which witness to a Reality beyond the purely material and temporal.

Morality

Because they reject religion, Communists reject all morals derived from it. Speaking in October 1920 to the Third All Russian Congress of the Young Communist League, Lenin repudiated the charge that Communists have no morals. He said that the Communists deny ethics only "in the sense in which they are preached by the bourgeoisie, a sense which deduces these morals from God's Commandments. . . . We deny all morality taken from superhuman or non-class conceptions. We say that this is a deception, a swindle, a befogging of the minds of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landlords and capitalists." The Communists claim that theirs is a system of ethics based on sound scientific principles.

Broadly speaking, we may say that ethics concerns man's conduct in both individual and group life. Ethics deals with what man *does* and *ought to do.* But the question of what man *ought to do* is integrally related to the more fundamental question of what man *is.* The Communists do not question this integral relation: their understanding of man is fundamental to their understanding of morality. Two assumptions underlie the Marxist conception of man: (1) Man is involved in a dialectical relationship with nature and history. He is constantly changing his environment and in turn is himself being changed or conditioned by the environment. (2) Man is primarily to be understood in terms of the economic class to which he belongs. Individual worth or uniqueness has no significance for the Marxist. On the basis of these two principles the Communist rejects any moral code which claims permanent, universal or eternal authority, and laughs at the emphasis on individual virtue.

According to Marx, men's ideas of what is good or bad are determined by the economic conditions of the social organism

of which they form part. He was not, therefore, concerned with the morality of individuals, but with that of groups, the group for him being primarily the class. The class struggle is the fundamental force behind the movement of history and so the interests of each class create their own ethic. So the Marxist is freed from allegiance to any absolute objective system of morals. To the Marxist such systems of morals which claim to be objective and absolute as, for instance, the Christian one, are more by-products of bourgeois mentality, partly spontaneous expressions of the social system, partly deliberate lies fostered to prop up that system and to cow the proletariat into submission. In other words, the ethical system of any community, like its religion and laws, is part of the superstructure created by the conditions of production always reflecting the interests of the dominant class. It is no more than the expression of class morality.

It is interesting to remember that *the Communist Manifesto* did not use the words *right, justice, or moral law*. On the other hand the key-word is *exploitation*. Even this word is not used in any sense of ethical condemnation, but as a description of the existing social relation between Capital and Labour. Thus, for the Marxist there are no absolute and universal conceptions of what is *just* and what is *right*. The basis of the Marxist ethic is what is called *"the concrete human situation"*, and that which is necessary rather than what is right or just. Conditions of production form the determining factor. What is good or what is bad is judged in the light of the material reality into which man is born and which surrounds him through life.

The Marxist rejection of the universality of moral conceptions can be summarised in the form of three propositions:

(*a*) Moral values change.

(*b*) They change in accordance with changes in society.

(*c*) The dominant moral values at any given time are those of the dominant economic class.

The Communist, therefore, is bound only by Communist morals, *i.e.*, those which promote the Communist revolution. Those acts are justifiable which are performed in the interests of the proletariat. Communist morality is relative to the end they have in view, namely, the overthrow of all those who keep the proletariat under subjection and the establishment of the classless society.

The Communist does not recognise the operation of any transcendental principle of love. Nor does he respect individual conscience. He has, however, a certain understanding of *duty* or *moral necessity*. This consists in co-operating with the historical movement toward Communism as defined periodically by the leaders of the Party who alone understand the true nature of the struggle. Communist morality, then, is obedience to the Party, which is the spearhead of the revolution. Membership in the Party is almost like being a soldier in the army. No individual freedom is possible. Members may differ on matters of strategy, but not on fundamentals. When a decision has been reached they must act together whatever their personal opinions. There can be no criticism of Party decisions, and those who stubbornly resist them will be liquidated.

The Communist Party can adopt different policies to suit different situations. It recognises three main stages in the development of Communism and for each stage it has a different approach. In each stage the end justifies the means.

(1) *Pre-revolution*: During this stage the primary end is to weaken capitalism by rousing public opinion against capitalism. Everything has to be done to enhance the reputation of Communism. If necessary the Communists will even co-operate with non-Communist forces. When it is expedient they are prepared to co-operate with capitalism. This is the basis of united front policies. But all such alliances can only be temporary. To quote the words of Lenin, "Such co-operation with or support of capitalist powers is like the rope which supports the man who is being hanged." They are prepared to use the ideas of bourgeois morality so as to win people to their side. For example, they are very strict about sex morals and do not tolerate any possibility of scandal about Communist Party members. The Communist countries are known for the absence of pornographic advertisements. They appeal to ideas of justice, peace and anti-corruption to win the support of the masses.

(2) *Revolution*: Once they enter the revolutionary period they must be ready not only for *action* but for *violent action*. The proletariat should be sufficiently armed so that they are not exploited by their allies. The duty of every Marxist in the period of revolution is to fight, if necessary to death, by whatever weapons he can conveniently lay hold on. The ruthlessness of the

Russian Revolution of 1917 is to be understood in the light of this attitude.

(3) *Post-revolution*: This period is marked by the dictatorship of the proletarian party. Everyone should conform to the party. There is freedom of expression of opinion on details, but not on matters of fundamental policy. In the operation of what they call the dictatorship of the proletariat there is no real freedom for any party other than the Communist Party. This is because they do not recognise any ends higher than those for which the Communist Party stands.

Even though Communist morality is based on the relativity of ethics, it must be asked whether Communism gives any real explanation for the devotion with which individuals sacrifice their lives for the establishment of the Communist ideal. Though they deny any absolute *oughtness* for human conduct individual Communists act as though there is an *oughtness* that subordinates all individual interests. We should also ask whether it is not necessary that the Communist programme itself be put under the judgment of a social revolution which does justice to human freedom.

THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

A BASIC principle of Communism is that theory and practice are inseparable. In order to understand Communism, therefore, we must take a long look at the history of Communist Parties. Fortunately, this task is simplified by the fact that each Communist Party—whether in Great Britain, China, the USSR or any other country—follows the same general strategy and roughly the same tactics as do the others. The history of the Communist Party of India illustrates these as they have been applied during the past thirty years to the changing political and economic conditions in this country.

I. Early period

Indian Communism was born out of the Indian National Movement, the founders of the party being younger leaders in the non-co-operation movements of 1919-21 who made more radical demands than the top-rank leaders of the National Congress. Inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the first principles of Marxism they believed that the key to revolution was the working class. Both the peasants and the workers had for a long time been victims of exploitation under the zamindari landlordism and the capitalist ownership of industries, and in many quarters there was consequent unrest and agitation. The discontent of peasants was strongest in Malabar and the United Provinces. The Moplah rebellion in Malabar (1920-21) was primarily a peasant's revolt.[1] The labour discontent expressed itself in the form of strikes, and, under the leadership of Diwan Chamanlal of Lahore, the All India Trade Union Congress was organized in October 1920.

From the earliest stages Indian Communism was directed by the Communist International (Comintern) which Lenin had

[1] For a detailed account of the Peasant Movement in Malabar see E. M. S. Namboothiripad, *A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala* (1943). For an account of the Movement in U. P. see A. Narendra Deva, *Socialism and the National Revolution*, Bombay, 1946, pp. 56-61.

formed in 1919. This said in 1922 that revolutionary agitation was possible in India. During the early years it was through M. N. Roy that the Comintern tried to direct the activities of the Indian Communists. Communist activity was banned by the Government of India but Communist propaganda was carried on in secret through newspapers, books and pamphlets brought in from outside, and with funds smuggled across the Northwest Frontier.

For some time M. N. Roy lived in Europe and published a magazine called the "Vanguard", copies of which along with other pamphlets were distributed in India. Following the decision of the Fifth Session of the Third International, held in Moscow in June 1924, that the Communist activity in British Colonies should be intensified, the Communists in Britain were asked to send an able group to give adequate leadership to the Party in India. Accordingly a group headed by George Allison went to India in 1926.[1] Under their leadership radical trade unions were organised in Bombay, the United Provinces and the Punjab. They instructed local agitators in the doctrines of Marx and Lenin, organized a Peasants' and Workers' Party, helped to form Communist-controlled trade unions and fomented a series of strikes in the railways and factories. Their work was so effective that there was a great rise in the number of strikes.[2] The textile and railway workers formed the best organized labour unions. The growth of the trade union movement was, however, accompanied by a split between the moderately reformist and the radically revolutionary groups. A Communist magazine called *The Masses of India* had to warn in 1927 that "it was absurd to seek for a special Indian variety of Communism; an Indian who calls himself a Communist must be a Communist like the others in the rest of the world." Though the top leadership of the Trade Union Congress was in the hands of the moderates like N. M. Joshi, the militant group had the support of the more powerful unions such as the Bombay Textile Workers' Union and the G.I.P. Railway Workers' Union. Gradually M. N. Roy lost favour with the militant Communists and the leadership of the Party was now taken by P. C. Joshi.

[1] This group was later followed by Philip Spratt, Benjamin Bradley and Lester Hutchinson.

[2] 192 strikes involving 131,655 workers took place in 1927-28 and 203 involving 501,851 workers in the following year.

who was to be its Secretary during the two decades that followed.

II. Relation with the National Congress up to 1945

(*a*) *Up to 1934.* The militant nature of the Communist Party was increasingly expressed by its unconditional demands for political independence as well as for justice for the workers. The Communists were trying to make use of the revolutionary ferment among labour and elsewhere to organise themselves into a strong and effective political group with independent policies. They were making attempts to take control of the AITUC, and not being satisfied with the progress they made in this, they walked out of the Calcutta Session of the AITUC presided over by Subhas Bose and under the leadership of S. V. Deshpande set up a Red TUC of their own, which however could not develop much, partly because of government repression and partly because of lack of sufficient Communist influence on labour at that time.

In March 1929 the leaders of the Communist Party were arrested under the Meerut Conspiracy case. At the same time eight members of the All-India Congress Committee were also arrested on the charge that they were spreading Communist propaganda. In the Meerut case P. C. Joshi and 28 other Communists were sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

It is, however, significant that as early as 1930 members of the Communist Party had serious suspicions about the National Congress. A pamphlet entitled *Platform of Action of the Communist Party of India* (1930) said:

> The greatest threat to the victory of the Indian Revolution is the fact that great masses of our people still harbour illusions about the National Congress and have not realized that it represents a class organization of the Capitalists working against the fundamental interests of the toiling masses of our country.[1]

The document particularly emphasised the fact that the agitation carried on by the left wing in the Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, Ginwala and others was the most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution. When

[1] This was quoted in the *Pravda* and the International Press Correspondence of the same year.

the Congress Socialist Party was organised in 1934, the Communists characterised it as "Social Fascist."

(*b*) 1934-36—*Rift with the Congress*

In 1934 the party was declared illegal by the government and Joshi had to work under-ground until the ban was lifted in 1942. The influence of Marxist doctrine in Congress circles became increasingly distasteful to the wealthier members of the Congress Party. The Communist influence on trade unions and the peasant movements (*Kisan Sabhas*) was gradually creating a demand for a dictatorship of the proletariat after the Soviet pattern.

Further, the relationship of the party to the Comintern made it obvious that the movement in India, though grounded on the real and urgent need for revolution in the country, was not truly indigenous. "Their theory was German, the sources of propaganda Russian and the men who had been most successful in organising the movement were British."[1] The Communist gravitation towards Moscow repelled nationalist sentiment and became a source of fear to the landlords and capitalists in the Congress. After the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932-34 Pandit Nehru wanted to consolidate the anti-imperialist forces in the country and create a united national front. The Communist members of the Congress wanted collective affiliation of mass organizations such as trade unions and *Kisan Sabhas*. Though Pandit Nehru was willing to take this step, the majority of the Congress rejected the proposal.[2] The Congress Working Committee, meeting in 1934 at Karachi, resolved that the Congress "neither contemplates confiscation of private property without just cause or compensation, nor advocacy of class-war. The Working Committee is further of the opinion that confiscation and class-war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence." According to Pandit Nehru this resolution, which was reiterated at the Patna Commitee of 1935, was meant to win the sympathy of the wealthy and the moderate and conservative elements in the country.[3] The tension continued, and the Communists strengthened their propaganda to win over the labour, peasant and student communities.

[1] W. Roy Smith, *Nationalism and Reform in India* (Yale 1938), p. 253
[2] P. C. Joshi, *Congress and Communists*, (1944), p. 4
[3] J. Nehru, *Autobiography* (1936), p. 557-f.

(*c*) 1936-39—*United Front policy*

Then came the United Front policy of the Communist International. The Seventh Congress of the Communist International recommended the formation of an anti-Facist Peace Front of all "democratic and peace-loving" countries and an anti-Facist People's Front of all "democratic parties" in each country. R. Palme Dutt and Benjamin Bradley of the British Communist Party wrote a pamphlet in 1936 called *Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India* in which they advocated that the Indian Communists "build the broadest possible front of all anti-imperialistic forces in the country."[1] Because of this message the Lucknow Session of the Congress was able to win over the Indian Communists to the policy of an anti-Imperialist United Front. This move was welcomed by the Socialists in the Congress who hoped that a union between Socialists and Communists would be possible. The Communists started proclaiming that the Congress was really a revolutionary organization and not a bourgeois reformist party. They began to say that the Congress Socialist Party was really a genuine Marxist Party. They also decided to dissolve their Red Trade Union Congress and affiliate all their unions to the AITUC. Carried away by this friendly gesture the Socialists encouraged the election of four confirmed Communists to the National Congress Executive in 1937-38. In the first number of their official organ, *National Front*, (13th Feb. 1938) the Communists emphasised the need to work as a party within the Congress. In 1939 they supported the National Congress in refusing to co-operate with the British in the war effort.

(*d*) 1939-42—*United Front betrayed*

When war broke out in 1939 the Communists declared it an imperialist war and adopted an anti-war policy. But in June 1941 Hitler's invasion of Russia forced the latter to join the war on the side of the Allies. But instead of strengthening the United Front with the Congress and the Socialists who were also opposed to the war, the Communists thought that a revolution would soon happen and so wanted to operate as the only party leading the revolution to success. As a result of three years of

[1] Quoted by Narendra Deva in *Socialism and the National Revolution* (1946), p. 125.

the United Front Policy the AITUC had become a predominantly Communist controlled organisation. And in the South (Andhra, Kerala and Tamil Nad) the C.S.P. units had been absorbed in the Communist Party. They now proclaimed themselves as the only real militants and all others as reformists. This ultra-leftist policy of the Communists led to division and splits in the All-India Kisan Sabha and the All-India Students Federation.

Stalin now described the conflict as an anti-Fascist People's war and called on all Communists to welcome the allied forces as the armies of liberation. The leaders of the Indian Communist Party also tried to convince their followers that it was the duty of every Communist to promote the war effort. All the major Communist bodies in India agreed with this attitude. Writing in September 1942, P. C. Joshi said, "... We opposed the imperialist war for all we were worth; we must go into the people's war for all we are worth. We had nothing to gain and everything to lose by supporting the imperialist war. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by going into the people's war. We can no more fight for our freedom by opposing the war. We have to realise our freedom by winning this war."[1] He criticized the policies not only of the Congress and the Muslim League, but also of the more militant groups of the Royists and the Forward Bloc led by Subhas Bose. As a result the government lifted the ban on the party and encouraged its activities, in large measure to counter the influence of Congress leaders who were arrested during their 1942 "Quit India" movement.

(*e*) 1942-46—*Final Estrangement from the Congress*

The Communists lost no time in taking advantage of the freedom of activity they had gained, and strengthened their control of the Trade Union Congress. Simultaneously the membership of the Party grew rapidly from 4,000 in July 1942 to 15,000 in May 1943, 30,000 in January 1944 and over 55,000 by the summer of 1946.[2]

After the war ended in 1945, the situation slightly changed. The Communists became once again pronouncedly anti-British

[1] See P. C. Joshi, *The Indian Communist Party* (London 1942) pp. 12, 17, 21, 27-ff, etc.
[2] R. Palme Dutt, *India Today* (Bombay 1949), p. 401.

and tried to consolidate their position as a nationalist movement for independence. They put forward concrete proposals for Congress–Muslim League unity. But the Congress leaders regarded them as traitors to the country and soon after the release of the Congress Working Committee in June 1945 they wanted to expel them from the Congress. The Communists did not want to leave the Congress at this stage and tried to defend their attitude. In his correspondence with Gandhi, Joshi attempted to show that many of the allegations against the Communists, such as that they were committed to violence, and were anti-God, anti-truth, anti-Gandhi and anti-national were not based on facts.[1] But all efforts to win the sympathy and confidence of the Congress failed and in 1946 the Communists resigned, giving the following as some of their reasons for doing so:

> The Congress policy is getting the Hindus and Muslims organized into hostile camps. The anti-Communist attitude of the Congress causes dismay among the friends of Indian freedom abroad, for world Communism is the most powerful single influence behind the forces of freedom. The Congress has shown fascist, reactionary and authoritarian tendencies. The Congress is giving direct or indirect help to the Imperialist rule in India.[2]

During the elections of 1946 the Communist Party fought both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. But the fact that the Communist Party scored very few successes in the provincial elections (a total of 8 seats against 930 for the Congress and 427 for the League) showed that the forces of nationalism and religious communalism were still far stronger than that of Communism.

From 1946 onwards two trends arose in the Central Committee of the party. P. C. Joshi, the spokesman of one point of view, reasoned that the country was not yet ready for a full-scale proletarian revolution and that the old policy of restraining mass actions should be continued. He advocated a policy of limited and critical co-operation with the two major parties in their plans for land reform and industrialisation. The other trend was represented by B. T. Ranadive, who held that the old

[1] See the Correspondence between Joshi and Gandhi, (Bombay 1945) pp. 21f
[2] P. C. Joshi, *A Free and Happy India* (Bombay 1946), pp. 16 ff.

policy should be radically changed in view of the new situation and that a militant policy of violent action should be pursued. Under the influence of the latter trend many violent actions and insurrections were attempted, but the party could not work out a consistent policy and programme during this period.

III. Independence and after

(*a*) *Policy of limited co-operation.* The Mountbatten plan for the transfer of power was accepted by the Congress and the Muslim League, and on August 15, 1947 the two independent States of India and Pakistan came into existence. The Communist resolution on the Mountbatten plan admitted that it was a step forward and that the Communists should now consolidate the forces of freedom and democracy and prepare the masses for further advance towards complete independence. When communalism broke into violence immediately following the partition of the Punjab, the Communists along with other parties pledged support to the Nehru Government in the task of suppressing communalism and establishing a secular state. Both P. C. Joshi and Palme Dutt even went to the extent of advising the Socialists, who were then planning to leave the Congress to form a separate party, that it was their primary duty at that juncture to rally round Nehru's banner against the opposition which he was facing from the section led by Sardar Patel.

(*b*) *The New Strategy, 1948—a call for immediate revolution.* Among party members, however, there was growing dissatisfaction with the policy of limited co-operation advocated by P. C. Joshi. Many believed that with the leaving of the British, and in the midst of the violent disturbances in the Punjab and the bitterness among refugees and right-wing Hindu groups, the Congress would be too weak to make an effective stand. They also gained confidence from their successes in peasant and labour movements. In the Telengana area of Hyderabad the party had achieved marked success in organising the peasants for armed struggle against the landlords and the Nizam's government. The AITUC was Communist-controlled. They had also succeeded in organizing many new cells in Malabar, Bombay, the Punjab, the U.P., Assam and Bihar.

The most important factor, however, was the change in

Soviet foreign policy to one of complete non-co-operation with non-Communist Governments. This change had been clear when the Cominform was founded in Poland in September 1947. Zhdanov had stated in his report to the Cominform that the world was now divided sharply into two hostile camps—that of imperialism led by Britain and America, and that of democracy led by the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe.

In the light of these developments the Central Committee of the Communist Party decided in December 1947 to revise its post-war policy and to endorse the views of B. T. Ranadive who pressed for an immediate programme of violent action. In order to explain the new policy to party members and leaders of Communist front groups a series of meetings was held in Calcutta in late February and early March 1948. The new strategy was officially adopted at the second Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Calcutta from February 28–March 6, 1948. The Party Congress supported the Central Committee in denouncing the former policy as one of "Right opportunism masquerading as Left unity."[1] Although Joshi had agreed in December to the change in policy[2] he was denounced in a series of behind-the-scene moves led by Ranadive. Joshi was removed from the Central Committee and Ranadive took over as Secretary of the Party.

In July 1948 the new strategy was set forth in detail in a *Political Thesis* published by the new leaders of the party. The change of policy was interpreted as mainly due to a new evaluation of the Indian and the international political situations. This view reflected that of the Cominform. It was held that the strength of the world-wide revolutionary forces had greatly increased. This was seen in the military and economic strength of the Soviet Union, the rise of People's Democracies in Eastern Europe, the rapid growth of Communist Parties in non-Communist countries, and the repeated victories of the Chinese Communist armies.[3]

The new strategy called for the formation of a Democratic Front based on the masses. This Front was to be an alliance,

[1] Communist Party of India: *Political Thesis* (Second Impression, May 1949), p. 61.
[2] P. C. Joshi, *Views*, p. 14.
[3] *Political Thesis*, pp. 1-3.

under Communist leadership, of the working class, the peasantry and the progressive intelligentsia. Specific tactics were discussed at length by the Politbureau of the party and described in a leading article in the *Communist* for June-July 1949. This article stressed the importance of immediate and, if necessary, violent struggle.

The following extracts from the speech of Pandit Nehru at the Indian Constituent Assembly on February 28, 1949, will give some idea of the consequences of the new strategy:

> ....The Communist Party of India has, during the past year, adopted an attitude not only of open hostility to the Government but one which can be described as bordering on open revolt. This policy has been given effect to intensively in certain limited areas of India and has resulted in violence, indulging in murders, arson and looting as well as acts of sabotage....
>
> The Communist Party of India....has pursued a technique of terrorising those who do not agree with its policy, it demands full freedom for itself to carry on its own anti-social and disruptive activities....
>
> ....The Government have arrested a number of members of the Communist Party of India....They have advised provincial governments to do likewise so as to ensure that vital communications are protected against sabotage....[1]

We should note, however, that violent struggle was not the only form recommended by the Politbureau. They said: "We still participate in parliaments; lead deputations and demonstrations; appear before industrial tribunals in trade disputes; etc"[2]

(c) Communists and Industrial Labour

In May 1947 the Congress Party, alarmed by the programme and strength of the AITUC, formed the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). The reasons for this move, according to Sardar Patel, were the refusal of the Communists who dominated the AITUC to accept arbitration, and their "go slow" policy when production was most needed.[3] The effectiveness of the new organization in countering the Communists was indi-

[1] Quoted in *Communist Violence in India* (issued by the Govt. of India September 1949, pp. 3-7.

[2] *Communist* (June-July 1949), pp. 47-48.

[3] *The Statesman* (Delhi), May 6, 1947.

cated by the fact that in January 1948, when the AITUC called for a general strike in the Kanpur textile mills, it received only a partial and short-lived response. The Labour Minister of the United Provinces said that the crisis had been stemmed by the INTUC.[1] In December 1948 the Socialist Party organized another labour movement called the Hind Mazdoor Sabha. The Socialist influence in labour also prevented the Communist use of strike for political ends. In 1948 the Socialist-led All-India Railwaymen's Federation, under the presidency of J. P. Narayan, threatened a nation-wide strike, the immediate issue being the curtailment of special grain-shop facilities by the government. The Minister of Transport conferred with Narayan and finally reached an agreement on the issue and the proposed strike was called off. For this Narayan was bitterly denounced by the AITUC and by the Communist members of the Railwaymen's Federation. They continued to press for the strike but were not successful.

(*d*) *Agrarian Communism*

Indian Communism's greatest success so far has been in organizing the peasants of Telengana area of Hyderabad State for armed struggle against landlords and the government. Following the war they were particularly successful in the backward districts of Nalgonda where the slogan "Land to the Tillers" was used to urge peasants to seize the property of landlords. The Nizam's Government met this threat with military and police raids, and on December 7, 1946 the party was banned.

In March 1948, following the decisions of the Second All-India Congress of the Party, the Hyderabad Communists made a major change in tactics. They began to cry for an independent Hyderabad. The Nizam's Government promptly lifted its ban on the party and released all arrested Communists. When Indian troops entered Hyderabad in September, the Communists obtained arms from the Razakars and were thus able to continue a successful struggle in several districts. The Communist ruthlessness was met by repressive measures by the government, which in certain areas went to excesses in the judgment of impartial observers. Party publications indicate that their aim was to set up in Hyderabad a regime similar

[1] *The Leader* (Allahabad), Jan. 28, 1948.

to that organized by the Chinese Communists in Yenan. All party members were helped to become literate and were given intensive grounding in Communist theory and Communist interpretation of current events.

The Communist Party has attempted to follow a similar pattern in other rural areas. In Bengal agitation was started among the share-croppers. In the Punjab Communists attempted to unite tenants against the *jagirdars* with the slogan "Land to the tillers of the soil." In other parts of India, notably in Malabar and, more recently, in Assam, the same slogan has been used. But nowhere else has the Communist Party met with anything like the success it has had in Telengana.

(e) The Failure of Terrorism

By the end of 1949 it was evident that the new strategy of violent struggle had proved a failure. Many factors contributed to this, the chief being the strength of the Indian Government, which Ranadive and others had miscalculated. The party had been banned in Bengal in May 1948 and in Madras in September 1948. The Central Government had arrested a large number of leaders, including S. A. Dange, General Secretary of the AITUC. Military action in Telengana had driven the Communist guerillas into the jungles. There was general public disapproval of Communist Party violence. Due to the arrest of S. A. Dange and other organisers the Communists also lost their leadership in the trade union field. In March 1949 the relative strengths of the various trade union groups were reported to be as follows:—

		Members	No. of Unions
INTUC	..	986,983	707
AITUC	..	679,143	734
Hind Mazdoor Sabha	..	618,802	302
Unaffiliated	..	50,000	450

Since that time the AITUC has been declining in strength while the INTUC has had a steady increase.[1] Describing this decline of Communist influence, P. C. Joshi said: "Month after month, membership has become less and less active till today a tiny percentage is in action.... The victory of the Chinese Communists

[1] Richard L. Park, "*Labour and Politics in India*" in *Far Eastern Survey*, August 10, 1949.

is the glory of World Communism, the collapse of the Indian Communists its shame."[1]

(f) Learning from China

In the spring of 1949 the Andhra Secretariat of the Party published an analysis of the Indian situation in which they challenged the right of the proletarian group to dictate to the peasants, at least during the initial stages of the revolution. They advocated a policy which would modify the armed struggle to permit co-operation with well-to-do peasants and middle bourgeois in the fight against feudalism and Big Business. To support their views they quoted the experience of the Chinese Communists:

> Mao, the leader of the historic Chinese liberation struggle from his unique and rich experience and study, has formulated a theory of new democracy. This is a new form of revolutionary struggle to advance towards Socialism in colonies and semi-colonies. Mao has advanced this new democracy as distinct from the dictatorship of the proletariat.[2]

The Indian Politbureau was in no mood at this stage to tolerate criticism and its members condemned the Andhra views for revealing "reformism in its most naked and gross form." They were not prepared to accept Mao's authority. According to them there was no authoritative source of Marxism beyond Marx, Engles, Lenin and Stalin.

The Politbureau soon proved to be blind to the realities of the world-wide Communist Movement. At a Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australian countries held at Peking in November 1949 Liu Shao-Chi, Vice-President of the World Federation of Trade Unions, said that "the path taken by the Chinese people is the path that should be taken by the peoples of the various colonies and semi-colonial countries in their fight for national independence and People's Democracy." The following were pointed out to be the main details of the Chinese formula for victory:—

1. The working class must unite with all who are willing to

[1] Quoted in Madhu Limaye, *Communist Party, Facts and Fiction*, 1951, p. 70.
[2] *Communist* (June-July 1949), p. 77.

oppose imperialism to form a broad, nation-wide united front.

2. This united front must be led by the working class which opposes imperialism most resolutely.
3. In order to enable the working class to achieve this end it is necessary to build up a Communist Party equipped with the theory of Marxism-Leninism, a party practising self-criticism and strict discipline and which is closely linked with the masses.
4. It is necessary to set up a people's liberation army, led by the Communist Party, powerful and skilful enough to fight enemies.

It was, however, admitted by the C.P.I. that India was not ripe for the fourth principle. It was even felt that it may not be necessary in India, in view of the difference in the political situation. The Peking Conference made no direct criticism of the Indian Party. But the Cominform journal published on January 27, 1950 an editorial article which said: "In these conditions the task of the Indian Communists, drawing on the experience of the national liberation movement in China and other countries, is naturally to strengthen the alliance of the working class with all the peasantry, to fight for the introduction of the urgently needed agrarian reform and on the basis of the common struggle for freedom and national independence of their country, against the Anglo-American Imperialists oppressing it and against the reactionary big bourgeoisie and feudal princes collaborating with them, to unite all classes, parties, groups and organisations willing to defend the national independence and freedom of India."[1]

Ranadive immediately issued a statement accepting the new line and offering an apology for his past errors. But his statement satisfied neither the Cominform noı the majorty of Indian Communists. The Party members demanded that Ranadive be removed from office along with his henchmen and that the Politbureau be dissolved. The Communist Central Committee met in May and June 1950 and decided to expel Ranadive from the position of the General Secretary and to put Rajeswar Rao from Andhra in his place. The Central Committee and the Politbureau were also radically reorganised. Rajeswar Rao himself

[1] Quoted in the *Communist* (February-March 1950), p. 14.

did not continue long as Secretary. He was expelled in October 1951 for failing to apply the Cominform directions to the Indian situation, and Ajoy Gosh became the General Secretary.

The new Central Committee issued a number of policy documents for the guidance of party members. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari (then Home Minister in the Central Cabinet) held that the Party had definitely decided to continue armed struggle as one of its major tactics. He charged that nothing in the party's behaviour indicated a sufficient change from the tactics of terrorism and sabotage to justify the lifting of the ban on its activities. At the same time it was clear that the Central Committee also advocated a "united front" programme. They wanted the Communists all over India to take full advantage of the coming general elections. Dr. A. Ahmed, Secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Committee of the Party, made this clear in a statement which said: "During the forthcoming general elections the Communist Party would join hands with all progressive and democratic elements in the country in order to insure that representatives elected by the people should really represent their democratic urges and interests."[1] This only shows that the Indian Communists are quite capable of adopting, as their Chinese comrades did, the tactics of "united front" or "armed struggle." The choice of the one or the other, or of a judicious combination of both, is a matter which depends entirely upon the party's judgment of the correlation of class forces in the situation.

(g) *On the eve of the General Elections—1953*

Failures during the past three years had led to division within the party. At the time of Ranadive's expulsion, the party was in effect split into three regional sections—those of Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra, with their respective headquarters at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Maharashtra Communist Party was not recognised by the new Central Committee. But now, efforts were made to close up the ranks and remove the divisions. Commissions were appointed by the Central Committee to review the cases of members who had been expelled. As a result the expulsion order on P. C. Joshi was withdrawn, although no decision was reached regarding Ranadive. The

[1] *The Statesman* (Calcutta), April 25, 1951.

Maharashtra Party reinstated D. K. Bedekar and held a special conference from March 30 to April 2, 1951 to consider the possibility of "forging a democratic front." The new policy announced by the Central Committee on April 25, 1951 revealed a general orienation in line with the views of Joshi and Bedekar and doubtless indicated a growing unity in the national party. The party also succeeded in removing some of the legal disabilities placed on it by the Central and State Governments.

Particularly in Bengal, Telengana and Travancore the Communists had considerable success in consolidating their position. In Bengal the party followed the new united front policy and this later led to the formation of a United Progressive Bloc as a loose coalition of the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the Communist Party. Similar coalitions were formed in Hyderabad and Travancore-Cochin.

Communists also had considerable success in stirring up suspicion of American and British foreign policy aims. The Stockholm Peace Appeal was widely circulated and signatures were obtained from several members of the Union Parliament. Headlines in the party press were directed principally against America. ("Gigantic American Spy-net in India, Yankee Saboteurs Hold up India's Biggest Development Project"; "Top A-Bomb Maniac Invited to India." "We know well the Aggressors." "They must quit our Asia"—are some examples.) Nehru was praised for his stand of neutrality, but the party urged that India should go further and withdraw from the British Commonwealth to join "the peace camp led by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China." This type of propaganda received a sympathetic hearing because of the general distrust of western imperialism.

One factor that aided the success of Communist propaganda was the increasing discontent with the Congress Government. This discontent was due partly to corruption and disunity within the ranks of the Congress party—elements which the Congress leaders have admitted and denounced publicly. The discontent was due also to impatience with the slow pace at which the government was carrying out social and economic reforms. Here the government was partly hampered by its loyalty to democratic and constitutional procedures. The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari

Abolition bill, for example, was held up by the High Court as transgressing Article 14 of the Constitution. The Communists were critical of both the national constitution and the land reform bills passed by the U.P. and other governments. They called for reforms that would bring more radical relief to the peasants.

IV. The strength and strategy of Indian Communism today

During the general elections the Communists won 26 seats out of 489 in the House of the People and 173 seats out of a total of 3280 in the State Legislative Assemblies. They and their allies now form the principal opposition in the Union Parliament and in the States of Madras, Hyderabad, West Bengal and Travancore-Cochin. However, in terms of percentage of the total votes cast, their strength is less than that of the Socialists and roughly equal to that of the Kisan Mazdoor Praja. The following chart gives statistics for the four major parties:

Party	*%-age of votes polled.* *State Assemblies.*	*House of the People.*	*%-age of seats won.* *State Assemblies.*	*House of the People.*
Congress ...	42.36	45.01	68.5	74.0
Socialists[1] ...	9.73	10.5	3.9	2.5
K.M.P.P. ...	5.1	5.87	2.3	2.2
Communists ...	5.84	5.06	5.2	5.5

The Communist victories were limited to areas such as the Telugu-speaking areas of Madras and Hyderabad where they had been working intensively for several years, and in Travancore-Cochin where they have a strong hold on labour. It must be pointed out that the Communists set up candidates only in places where there was some reasonable hope of winning. The Socialists were not so careful, and their higher percentage of votes is not very significant. In many States the Communists polled few votes and won no seats. In the whole of North India they won only six seats, all of them in the Punjab.

[1] The Socialists and the K.M.P.P. merged to form the Praja Socialist Party.

The following chart shows the strength of the Communists in States where they are most influential:—

	No. of Communists elected to the House of the People.	Total elected.	No. of Communists elected for the State Assembly.	Total elected.
Madras ...	8	75	62	375
W. Bengal ...	5	34	28	238
Hyderabad ...	7	25	42	175
Travancore-Cochin ...	3	12	25	108

The present policy of the C.P.I. is the old united front technique designed to bring as many groups as possible under Communist leadership. The common enemy is the West, especially America, and the common ideal is New China. The Communists use every device at their command to try to prove that India's problem would be solved if it followed China's example. ..

In supporting this united front policy the C.P.I. makes at least four major claims regarding Communism:

(a) *Communism is true nationalism*

The party is now making an all-out bid to win every disillusioned nationalist, and to pose as the true champion of Indian freedom against the subtle pressures of western imperialism.

(b) *Communism is Gandhism in practice*

This is one of the most subtle and powerful of the Communist claims. It appeals to the frustrated idealism of many who believed that independence would be accompanied by an immediate improvement in India's social and economic conditions. Recently Dr. J. C. Kumarappa and others have said that Communism, shorn of its cult of violence, is nothing but Gandhism and aspires for the same ideas and the same ideals as Gandhism.

(c) *Communism grants complete religious freedom*

The Communists know that one of the most damaging charges against them in the eyes of Indians is their atheism and record of religious persecution in Russia. For this reason they have played down their anti-religious propaganda, and claim that they have no objection to any religion so long as it does not support reactionary social practices.

(d) Communism champions the cause of any oppressed group

The Communists have sought to win the support of many disgruntled and restless groups in the country. In Bengal and in the Punjab they have loudly championed the rights of refugees from Pakistan. In South India they have exploited the anti-Hindi agitation and led the dangerously divisive movement for linguistic provinces. In Assam they have organized the hill tribes to fight for their autonomy against the Central Government. In the Punjab they have won considerable support among the Sikhs, many of whom are bitter against what they consider the betrayal of their interests by the Congress.

The Resolution adopted by the Politbureau of the Central Committee of the C.P.I. in August 1952 illustrates the same policy.[1] It complains that the economic situation in India is growing worse because of the tie-up of India's economy with "Anglo-American Imperialists", and that instead of improving the food production with basic agrarian reforms and close trade relations with socialist and democratic countries, the government is relying on food from America. It recognises organizational weakness in the Communist Party and points out that the immediate task is to build the United Democratic Front. "The task today is that of broadcasting the mass movement by drawing into it all sections including the national bourgeoisie and Congressman."[2] The Resolution further states: "In evolving forms of struggle we have to get rid of all dogmatic and preconceived notions. The aim of each specific partial struggle must be, above all, the winning of specific immediate demands and the building of broadest popular unity for these demands. For this the people must use not merely the weapon of mass strikes and demonstrations but also the traditional forms of peaceful mass action developed by our own national struggle. The criterion in each case should not be whether a particular form of struggle is "revolutionary" or "reformist" but whether by resorting to it the people get unified, give expression to their discontent, get drawn into the struggle against the Government."[3]

It is difficult at this stage to make any confident prediction

[1] See *New Age*, September 1952. pp. 31-45.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 40.
[3] *Ibid* p. 41.

as to the future strength of Communism in India. In certain areas, such as Andhra and Travancore-Cochin, the Party appears to have lost ground since the general elections. In other areas, such as the Punjab, it is apparently gaining in influence. Among certain groups it has had considerable success with its united front policy, but the Politbureau Resolution referred to above reveals a certain lack of confidence among Party members, and stresses the need for greater activity. Indian Communists are doing their best to follow the strategy which proved so successful in China, but as yet there is no Red Army in India and the Congress administration is far more stable and secure than was the Kuomintang at any stage in its history.

This brief account of the history of the Communist Party of India points to what is perhaps the basic defect in Communism. In their relentless struggle for political power the Communists tend to use the social revolution only as a means to establish their own totalitarian regime. By doing so they prove to be more reactionary than some of those whom they oppose. Why this should be so is the question we shall consider in the following chapter.

COMMUNIST BETRAYAL OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

BETRAYAL is the key word to describe Communism. Communists are in the habit of calling every opponent of theirs a fascist or a counter-revolutionary. The fact is, however, that many a person who had joined the Communist Party or become a fellow traveller out of a passion for human freedom and social justice has come out to give his story of the Communist betrayal of the social revolution. We cannot brush aside easily the large volume of "the literature of disillusionment" which cries with Auden:

> O Freedom still is far from home
> For Moscow is as far as Rome
> Or Paris.

This is not the battle cry of fascist counter-revolutionaries asking for the blood of the Communists, but the agonizing cry of spiritual desolation and despair. Most of them knew that in renouncing Communism they were facing isolation and loneliness. Take for instance the desolation of Richard Wright as he left the Party:

> For I know in my heart that I should never be able to write that way again.
> should never be able to feel with that simple sharpness about life.
> should never again express such passionate hope.
> should never again make so total a commitment of faith.

Or Ignazio Silone:

> The truth is this: the day I left the Communist Party was a very sad one for me, it was like a day of deep mourning, the mourning for my lost youth. And I came from a district where mourning is worn longer than elsewhere.

That prospect of homelessness has prevented man from obeying the voice of conscience. Yet some have with very great hesitation broken with Communism, because they found it betraying man. As Sydney Hook has said, "They protested as *human*

beings against the degradation imposed on other human beings, or as *Socialists* against the mounting inequality of power and position which in fact produced new class-distinctions, or as *Marxists* against the wilful disregard of objective historical conditions, and the blindness to the limits of endurance of human flesh."

Bertrand Russell, reviewing *The God that Failed*, a book consisting of sketches of six ex-communists or ex-fellow-travellers, says, "One by one having found (as they thought) faith and hope and the warmth of comradeship in Communism they became disillusioned; in place of equality they found privilege, in place of freedom they found tyranny, in place of trust they found universal suspicion, and in place of brotherly love they found bitter all-consuming hate."

Among Indians such witnesses are few. Socialists like Pandit Nehru and Jai Prakash Narayan and poets like Rabindra Nath Tagore were once drawn to Communism and the Soviet experiment, but moved away from it as the inhumanity of the monolithic Soviet system became clear through purges, blood baths and unnecessary violence. Jai Prakash Narayan has described these years as "years of poignant and tragic history, of lost dreams and of the very God that failed." Many of the younger generation have gone through the same experience as the Communist Party of India has swayed from one "deviation" to another, from the treacherous united front policy to a policy of terrorism and back again. Those who have come out of the Party are many, but they have yet to make their story available to others.

Space forbids us to sketch more than the verdict of a few from different countries regarding the Communist betrayal of the social revolution. Take the case of Richard Wright and Ignazio Silone. Wright, as a Negro dweller in the Chicago slums, felt that Communism was the answer to social and racial injustices which democracy could not solve. But he found mutual suspicion and name-calling within the Party, and no real passion for the values he sought. It was moral protest against the injustices of the present social order that made Silone a socialist. He became one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, and between 1921 and 1927 he repeatedly visited Moscow to participate in the meetings of the Communist International.

What surprised him most was that the "adversary in good faith" was never recognized by the Russian leaders; adversaries were there only to be liquidated. He saw the degeneration of one-party dictatorship in Russia: "The Russian Communist Party which had suppressed all rival parties and abolished any possibility of general political discussion in the Soviet Assemblies itself suffered a similar fate, and its members' political views were rapidly ousted by the policy of the Party machine. From that moment every difference of opinion in the controlling body was destined to end in the physical extinction of the minority. The Revolution which had extinguished its enemies began to devour its favourite sons." He saw Stalin control the Communist International and found that there was no respect for truth or honest discussion in its committee meetings. Silone tells of a meeting at which a resolution was proposed condemning a document by Trotsky. The members had never seen the document which they were asked to condemn. Silone protested against the procedure and after a great deal of name-calling the proposal was withdrawn. But later a report appeared that the Committee had passed the resolution of condemnation. Silone asked himself: "Have we come to this?" Subsequently he left the Party—a lonely man.

One may speak of Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian Communist. In Germany when the long night descended with Hitler in power, with Thalman the Communist leader in jail and thousands of Party members murdered and tens of thousands in concentration camps, Koestler found that the masters in the Kremlin still sat in merciless judgment over "the bandits and agents of Fascism who murmured against the official line, according to which the Socialist Party was the Enemy No. 1 of the German working class, and the Communist Party had suffered no defeat." The Russian leaders with their policy of one-class one-party prevented the German Party from facing up to the situation, and the social revolution was betrayed. What Koestler saw in Russia disillusioned him further. "The necessary lie, the necessary slander, the necessary intimidation of the masses to preserve them from short-sighted errors, the necessary liquidation of oppositional groups and hostile classes, the necessary sacrifices of a whole generation in the interest of the next"—it all sounded necessary when one had the

Party faith. But this philosophy of necessity raised questions which finally led Koestler to break with the Communist faith and to reaffirm "that man is reality, mankind an abstraction, that the end justifies the means only within very narrow limits, that ethics is not a function of social utility and charity not a petty-bourgeois sentiment but the gravitational force which keeps civilisation in its orbit."

Or take the case of Andre Gide, France's distinguished contemporary man of letters. To him the Soviet Union was "more than a chosen land—an example, a guide." He visited Soviet Russia with a will to believe the best, but returned disillusioned. He found that the Russian people were conditioned to accept slavery as freedom. He writes, "Every morning the *Pravda* teaches them just what they should know and think and believe. And he who strays from the path had better look out. So that every time you talk to one Russian you feel as if you were talking to them all. Not exactly that everyone obeys a word of command; but everything is so arranged that nobody can differ from anybody else. Remember that this moulding of the spirit begins in earliest infancy. . . . This explains their extraordinary attitude of acceptance which sometimes amazes you if you are a foreigner, and a certain capacity for happiness which amazes you even more." Gide found that the revolutionary critical spirit had vanished from society. He writes, "What is wanted now is compliance, conformism. . . . I doubt whether in any other country in the world, even in Hitler Germany, thought can be less free, more bowed down, more fearful (terrorized), more vassalized," Most of all Gide was apprehensive of its effect on culture. "What is demanded of the artist, of the writer is that he shall conform: and all the rest will be added to him."

One may continue to speak of other witnesses—Spender, Orwell, Hyde, Fischer, Eastman and the many Party comrades of Russia and Eastern Europe, all of whom have a sorry tale to tell. All of them would agree that a betrayed revolution is worse than a lost revolution; for, as Sidney Hook puts it, "A lost revolution is a defeat in one battle of an enduring war: a betrayed revolution invalidates the fundamental principles on behalf of which the war is waged, dispirits and makes cynical an entire generation, and far from removing the arbitrary power of man over man secures it more firmly."

Why this betrayal?

There are many reasons why Communism turns against the very ends of social justice which it claims to pursue. Fundamentally the root-cause for this miscarriage is due to the very nature of Communist philosophy. We would draw attention to certain significant defects in its ideology which result in this tragic perversion.

Man only a means

Communism lacks reverence for human personality. It does not recognize the fundamental rights of the human person and their inviolability by state and society. In Communist countries everywhere man is treated as though he were only an appendage of the economic and political machine.

The Communist view of man is derived from its materialistic philosophy. It regards man as a product of nature, and like every other material object determined by natural laws. Man can be dealt with like any other material thing. This is to deny the mysterious element of freedom and responsibility which man does possess, and because of which he transcends nature. Marx himself maintained that the doctrine of the value of the individual is an "illusion, dream and postulate of Christianity." It is only as discharging economic functions that men have value at all, only "as personifications of economic categories and representatives of special class relations and interests." Nor does the question of individual responsibility arise in this context, for the development of the economic structure of society is merely a natural process. This would mean that both the capitalists and the workers in our world are equally creatures of necessity. They are not responsible for what they are, nor for what they do in the economic order. Now just as we kill bugs and mosquitoes even though we know that they live on our blood, not by free choice but by necessity, so also the ruthless extirpation of capitalists by workers is by force of necessity. The question of personal responsibility does not arise.

In such a materialistic conception of man's value as dependent entirely on the functions he performs, or the forces he represents, there can be no recognition of any rights of the human person as fundamental or universal. Communist materialism, therefore, treats men as means to class-ends, as appendages of

class-interests and the class-state. It becomes the basis, in turn, of a totalitarian denial of human rights and liberties. It ends naturally in creating a "mass-man", where men are no more than parts of a huge economic and political machine which uses all the psychological and social techniques of modern science to "condition" men and subordinate them to its own ends.

Might is Right

Communism maintains that moral law is determined by power-politics; not that power-politics is controlled by the moral law. This is because, according to Communism, all morality is class-morality. At best, in our capitalistic society what we call morality and religion, Communists would say, are just "bourgeois prejudices"; morals change according to the times and the economic order of a people's society; there is no such thing as an eternal moral law. As Engels put it, since "society has moved in class-antagonisms, morality was always a class morality." Morality only serves the class-struggle which aims to bring about the desired end of a classless society through the exercise of power-politics. Lenin admits this with brutal frankness: "We say that our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class-struggle of the proletariat. . . . ready to employ trickery, deceit, law breaking and concealing truth," if need be, to destroy the capitalist system. Success becomes the only moral criterion and power is invested with its own moral justification. In the last analysis, Communist ethics would come very near saying that Might is Right.

What have been the consequences? The glorification of inhumanity and power-politics in the name of the Party and the perversion of the social revolution, under its leadership, into a new tyranny, more brutal than the world had ever seen! Asoka Mehta quotes a Communist statement: "Who fights for Communism must be able to fight and not to fight, to say the truth and not to say the truth, to render and deny service, to keep a promise and to break a promise, to go into danger and to avoid danger, to be known and to be unknown. Who fights for Communism has of all the virtues only one; that he fights for Communism."

Because Communism lacks a conception of the independence of moral reality over against power, it denies the supremacy of

the moral law over power-politics, and hence in the long run defeats the very purpose of the social revolution.

One Class—one Party—one Leadership

Another serious defect with Communism is that, as a matter of principle, it denies freedom of criticism and opposition, which is an essential means of checking corruption of power and of preventing totalitarianism.

We have already referred to the reasons adduced by Lenin and Stalin as to why Communists maintain that the principles of one-party government and of "centralism" are fundamental to their political theory. We need now to take account of certain consequences resulting from the application of these principles.

Firstly, the widening gulf between the working class and the Communist Party has led in countries under Communist regimes to the tyranny of a new caste constituting the "high command." Even as early as 1918 Rosa Luxemburg saw this coming, and she wrote, "The leadership is in reality in the hands of a dozen men of first-class brains even though, from time to time, an elite of the working class is called together in Congress to applaud the speeches of their leaders and to vote unanimously for the resolutions they put forward." This prophecy has been fulfilled to the very letter!

Secondly, the application of the principle of centralism to the organization of the world Communist movement accounts for the character of the Communist International (Comintern, and now, the Cominform) under the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This has meant the transformation of national Communist parties into branches of the International. The indigenous character and independent leadership of the several Communist parties have been lost; the Communist parties outside Russia too often betray the interests of the working class of their various countries in the interest of the Soviet fatherland. And what is worse, a world-wide instrument of Soviet imperialism has come into existence, with Russian fifth-column entrenched in all the countries of the world!

A third feature of the development is that it has created a split in the working class of the world, with a consequent never-ending feud between the Communist party and other labour

parties in every country. As everybody knows, it was this disunity within the working class which led to the fascist counter-revolutions and dictatorships in Italy and Germany. So long as the Communists continue to remain a branch of the Cominform they will not recognize any other party as a working class party and their strategy of a united front will be only a method of liquidating a rival in order to extend the influence of Russian foreign policy. Communist history in India and elsewhere is clear evidence of this claim.

A Holy Crusade

Communism invests politics with a halo of sanctity, making its endeavour to bring in the classless society something of a holy crusade. The religious passion and self-righteousness so characteristic of all Communist politics is a dangerous thing. For this "religious" conviction that politics is the one means to "save" the whole man, body, mind and spirit, makes Communism totalitarian in the literal sense. It leaves no area of human life as private or non-political, but seeks to bring the total life of man under its sway. Nicholas Berdyaev, who ought to know more about it than most people, is right when he says that "in endeavouring to attain an inner communion of men, a brotherhood, by this external compulsion, Communism enters an evil path leading it straight to tyranny."

It is not here suggested that a profession of the proper conceptions of man and ideals of society will by itself make for the realization of justice. In fact it is the divorce between profession and practice in democracy which impels many to embrace Communism. But not to profess right values is to cut at the very root of healthy social, political and economic life. What is needed is not a break with democracy because it is weak and formal, but an attempt to redeem democracy by putting social, economic and cultural substance into its forms.

THE ALTERNATIVE—A TRUE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Is there a democratic alternative?

IF as we have seen, Communism destroys the social goal of the revolution in the process of giving it form and content, it turns reactionary and defeats its own ends. Therefore we must resist it. Yet in so doing we should not ally ourselves with counter-revolutionary parties of the extreme Right, but with those forces which work for a genuine revolution to secure personal values and human rights. The crucial question which many young people, disillusioned by Communism, ask is this: Is there an alternative? Some of them, who have left the Communist Party of India, have not yet found a new political home. What are they to do?

At the Bangkok Conference held in 1949 the Church leaders of East Asia gave a direction which needs serious consideration. "In those countries", they said, "where the possibility exists of transforming the social order democratically, so that the means employed may not destroy the end of justice, *a true social democracy* may be the answer to Communism." Such a possibility exists in India today. Therefore, the choice for us is not either bread or freedom: we can well have a society where both bread and freedom can be secured.

This, however, is a very bold assertion. Its truth can be laid in question, and we would do well first to examine the objections raised by people who doubt the possibility of a democratic alternative to Communism in India. The following are some of the difficulties in the way.

(1) India is economically a backward country. Therefore our situation is not parallel to what holds good of industrialized countries. Their main problem is not one of production. They have long ago passed through the industrial revolution and have achieved a healthy balance between agriculture and industry. Their problem is rather of equitable distribution. On

the contrary, we in India are faced with the pressure of two revolutions at once: on the one hand, of agricultural and industrial production in a feudal country of impoverished peasants and, on the other, of social justice. As Aneurin Bevan recently remarked, "There is no precedent in modern history of a feudal society going through an industrial revolution with the democratic consent of the people." The British revolution procured its capital at the cost of oppressive poverty of labour at home and imperialist exploitation abroad. The people came to have an effective voice in government only after industrialization had gone far. America did not have a feudal structure to begin with. Russia chose the authoritarian way to pass from the feudal to a modern industrial society. Japan built its capitalism without democratic government. China has now chosen the Russian pattern. The question is, Can India, going the way of democracy, successfully revolutionize her agriculture, industrialize her economy and achieve a Welfare State?

(2) It is doubted whether Indian democracy has the social basis necessary for its stabilization and growth. Our joint families, the caste system and ancient village community patterns based on feudal authority are all breaking up with the impact of the new ideas of fundamental rights, individual freedom and social equality. This process of disintegration of the old communal foundations might leave the individual without any sense of moral standards and social obligations. The growing urbanization of life increases the peril of *atomization* of society. Such individuals fall easy prey to the propaganda, slogans and power-politics of modern totalitarian parties. Add to this the prevailing illiteracy of the people, and you get a situation very unfavourable to democracy. For democracy requires moral self-awareness and a civic sense which can come only when men get their training for responsible social living in social groups. Can India build such a new social foundation to make democracy work?

(3) Besides, democracy needs a cultural basis. The Western impact on India was as much cultural as it was political and economic. In fact, the political, economic and social ferment in New India is due to ideas and conceptions that have come to us from the West. Democratic traditions and institutions have a climate of thought which is native to them. Whether

these ideas have taken deep enough root in the cultural soil of India to provide vitality and renewal to Indian democracy is open to question. In India today many would give intellectual assent to democracy. But if the images, myths, and rituals that feed the imagination and move the emotions remain alien to democratic conception, democratic institutions have a precarious existence. Even those educated in the Western cultural tradition of the modern universities have a split mind—they are scientific rationalists at school and custom-tradition-bound at home. This cultural instability has been enhanced by the disintegration of the democratic tradition in the West itself, and in consequence Western cultural values are already at a discount in the minds of the educated. Serious attempts are being made to redefine and reintegrate the ancient cultural tradition of India, in the light of the demands of the new democratic order. Can this be done soon enough to sustain democratic politics?

(4) Apart from these economic, social and cultural factors, there is a more immediate political consideration. The present world situation with its Big Power politics militates against the positive programmes of democratic social reconstruction in India. Communists and anti-communists will find international support behind them; and if the Big Power cold war becomes more acute, they will grow in strength. And even democrats may begin to look to guns rather than to bread and freedom to fight Communism. At certain times, military and police action may be necessary to defend democracy, and to give it time for repentance and amendment of life. But in a world situation such as ours, there is always the possibility of a total betrayal of democracy and social justice, not by Communism but also by anti-Communism, rearmament and war.

Without denying the force of these objections we emphatically maintain that the possibility of a democratic transformation of society exists in India. We would give the following reasons:

(1) Thanks to the non-violent transfer of power from Britain, there are stable conditions of civil and political life which even the conscious effort of the Communists with their policy of terrorism has not been able to destroy. For that same reason, the Indian people have inherited from the British political and

juridical institutions of the parliamentary democracy which induce habits of behaviour and ways of thinking that are conducive to the growth of democratic consciousness in India. The last general election has shown that the people of India can take to democratic forms. That the Communists themselves have been compelled to turn to democratic ways of political activity is an indication of the strength of the faith in democracy among the people of this country.

(2) In spite of the instability of the educated classes, they remain the intellectual backbone of Indian democracy. There is a strong middle class in the country which is at home in the climate of thought and of cultural values essential for the success of democracy.

(3) The Gandhian and socialist traditions from which many of the present Indian leaders draw their inspiration can supply what liberal parliamentary democracy lacks by way of moral and social passion. The emphasis on constructive social activity and non-violence in the country is an asset to Indian democracy.

(4) The eclipse of the communal parties in the last general election shows that India has taken to secular democracy and the idea of political parties based on economic and social objectives.

(5) By way of achievements, Nehru's government has something to its credit. Reforms of a far-reaching nature are being enacted in land-tenure and other property relations. The Five-Year Plan is a bold venture to face squarely the questions of production and distribution. Nehru's foreign policy preserves an outlook where priority is given for social development in the country and aid from abroad for that development can be procured without political strings attached to it. The Community-projects have been an attempt to mobilize the people behind responsible ways of democratic living.

Things may not be moving as fast as they should to fire the imagination and enthusiasm of the people. But in the light of the vitality democracy is showing in the country at large, democrats have no reason to be defeatist in their attitude. Communism is not inevitable, because democratic transformation of society is possible. Since the issue of Democracy *versus* Communism depends upon human choice, we cannot say there is any inevitability about the success of democracy. But people

who think that Communism is inevitable under the present situation are only making it inevitable. They are people who accept defeat before the battle is joined. We are called to work while it is day.

Towards a true social democracy

By Social Democracy we do not mean any one particular political ideology represented by any one political party. It is an idea represented by all those ideological and political forces that are seeking to destroy the false assumption that in India today people have to choose between the present semi-feudal order and totalitarian Communism. What is here meant by a true social democracy is a society where freedom, order and justice are dependent on and not destroyed by one another.

There are several forces that aim at the true social democracy in India. Some of these are political; others deal with the social, cultural and other factors which may be regarded as pre-political, but as basic to politics. In politics there are different parties and ideologies working for the social democratic ideal. Therefore, every Christian should make his choice of a party and of an ideology, depending upon his judgment of the situation and of the emphasis which he thinks is needed today for the building up of a new society where freedom, justice and order are procured for the people. At the same time he should seek to reinforce the religious, cultural, and social values of democracy. Wherever we are, we have the duty to strengthen the democratic approach to the revolution of our times. Thus alone will there emerge in India a healthy, positive alternative to Communism, which people will defend with enthusiastic approval because it provides them bread, freedom and security.

Indian Liberalism, Indian Socialism and Gandhism have been at work to define the features of such a social democracy. All of them support the revolution whereby feudalism will be replaced by a new order. Some of the features of this new order that have emerged in the definitions are the following:

1. *Political Freedom*: The fundamentally important thing about liberal democracy is that it has built into the structure of its political technique and institutions checks on the abuse of power. Politics is power-politics; democracy does not deny it. But it does not trust those in power, however noble their

aspirations and however loud their affirmations of moral ideals. Democracy believes that if the corruption of power is to be kept in check it must in part be by the opposition and criticism of those who themselves are seeking power, and in part by the rule of law that guarantees fundamental rights to man. In other words, democracy takes power and law equally seriously and seeks to prevent the exercise of arbitrary power by law, on the one hand, and by political opposition, on the other. This peculiar relationship between power and law is based on the conviction that there is no possibility of a final solution to the problem of power in politics and that there is no order of society that will not need change. Democracy is suspicious of power. And democracy has the instrument of making radical social changes non-violently and without loss of continuity. Gandhism has added its non-violent technique of *satyagraha* to Indian democracy.

2. *Economic Democracy*: The Welfare State is now accepted as the ideal of the Indian Government. This ideal is a contribution of socialist thought. Political democracy keeps political power responsible to the people; Socialism advocates that the centres of economic power which have such tremendous influence over people's lives should also be made responsible to the people. Without this, political democracy does not become fully substantial and real. In the Indian situation it would involve the following: (a) Abolition of the remaining feudal elements in economic life. The peasant has to be liberated from the landlord and the money-lender and made the owner of the land he tills. (b) Abolition or effective control of the motive of private profit in basic and large-scale industries, and economic planning of industrial and agricultural production and of more equal distribution. Full employment, a decent standard of food, clothing and housing for all, liquidation of illiteracy, educational opportunities for all children and abolition of wide disparities in income and wealth, are recognized objectives of democratic economic planning. The goal of a casteless and classless society should be steadily before the Indian people. The future generations should not be sacrificed for the present; neither should the present generation be sacrificed for the future.

3. *Decentralization of power*: Centralization of economic and political power has become inevitable. But it has its dangers

which must be guarded against. Centralization of power inherent in large-scale industrialization and social planning, if unlimited, may destroy personal responsibility and human values. Therefore it is necessary to set limits to centralization by consciously planning for small economic units and political associations where power and responsibility can be personally exercised and shared. Gandhism has brought this to the fore, and Indian democracy, though it may not accept Gandhian attitudes wholly, can reject this basic emphasis only at its peril.

4. *Social Pluralism*: Politics and economics are only the means to realize the goal of a rich social life. And a rich social life is the foundation for healthy political and economic life. Man's essential life consists in personal relations. Since a man can have direct personal relations with only a limited number of persons, the art of social living has to be learned and practised in small social groups, like the family and other intimate neighbourhood communities. The problem of modern democracy is to "find democratic ways of living for little men in big societies, for men are little and their capacity cannot transcend their experience." Therefore innumerable, intimate social groups in which men can enter into personal relationships of love and fellowship with one another form the essential social basis of a healthy democracy. They give men social and cultural stability that can resist the onslaughts of an irresponsible individual and an equally irresponsible collectivism.

A dynamic hope

Social democracy and its political programme assume that a man is a person, that he is made for freedom, social fellowship and mutual service. In the heyday of liberal democracy, men believed in the inevitability of progress and the ultimate realization of the brotherhood of man. But two world wars have since destroyed that belief. Today Communism holds that through the inevitable establishment of a true communism history is working its plan of human redemption. The history of Communism for those who would care to read it has belied that hope. Our need is for a transcendent faith that believes in the redeeming act of a Personal God as the ground of human personality. Only such a faith that hopes in the final victory of the Kingdom of God beyond the failures of history can sus-

tain men in their concern for persons and their fundamental rights of freedom and justice. Only the knowledge that every man is a brother for whom Christ died, the assurance that Christ rules the world from heaven and the hope that He will finally come to establish His Kingdom can give the Christian the dynamic to work confidently for human freedom and justice, not caring what failures he faces in history.

THE CHURCHES IN COMMUNIST LANDS

WHAT is Communism doing to the churches? There are conflicting answers to this question—some saying that there is complete freedom of religion in Communist countries, others that the Communists are doing everything possible to crush the churches. There are two main reasons why it is difficult to give a clear and accurate answer. The first is the scarcity of reliable information. Some information is available in the form of official acts of the States or in articles by top-ranking Communists. Other information is supplied by occasional visitors, by refugees and by letters and reports. All of this information must be studied carefully before one can be sure of having a fairly accurate picture of the actual conditions. The second reason is that conditions differ widely from country to country. In some the Communists have been in power for several years; in others they are still in the process of establishing full control. In some Communism has come in association with foreign occupation forces, and in others its rise was determined more by a native force. Also, the local strength of the churches differs widely from country to country. In East Germany, for instance, the majority of the population has a strong Protestant tradition, while in China only one per cent of the people are Christians.

Despite these variations it is possible to point to a certain general pattern of Communist action with regard to the churches. This pattern is governed by two basic factors—the Communist understanding of religion, and the demands of the totalitarian state—both of which have been discussed earlier in this book. In many countries it has followed five major lines of operation:

a) nationalization of educational and social service institutions belonging to the churches;
b) elimination of religious opposition;
c) severing of church contacts abroad;
d) control of church administration; and
e) breakdown of church unity.

Most observers agree that the Communists are not yet seeking to eliminate the churches. They probably realize that Christianity cannot be destroyed from without; that it is only purified and toughened by direct persecution. All that they wish to do at the moment, therefore, is to "domesticate" the churches, *i.e.*, to make them tame and harmless, so that they can in no wise interfere with or judge the policies of the new regime. In this connection it is important to remember that when Communists speak of freedom of religion they mean only freedom of worship. This has been made clear in numerous articles by Communist leaders. One of them, J. Ibrahimov, writing of religion in the USSR said:

> The Soviet State, guaranteeing to the church-goer the right to worship as he will, asks only one thing of the Church, that it shall not meddle in the social and political activities of the State.... The Soviet State regards the Church as a private society with limited functions concerned only with performing acts of worship.... All other undertakings, particularly in the social and political field, are plainly unsuited to the church as a whole, and must therefore not be allowed.

What pattern or response do we find among the churches? One writer has described three major responses or religious attitudes which are found in every confession and nation.

a) There is a "people's democratic church," usually led by government-appointed men and enjoying certain privileges and position in return for its espousal of government programme.

b) There is a "church of the resistance" group which considers the only solution to be through violent and active opposition; they are longing for the restoration of the old order. Especially in Eastern Europe, this represents a large number of people and most Roman Catholics.

c) There are small spiritual fellowships of those who have nothing more to lose for they count only God to be important, who have everything to gain for they have Christ and unlimited ways of witnessing. Their struggle lies in their material simplicity and spiritual solidarity, remarkably similar to the apostolic fellowship of New Testament days.

The real hope for the future appears to lie in these small informal Christian fellowships. One observer has described

them and stressed their importance. "They have no Bible schools," he says, "no church clubs or youth groups, no church recreation halls, no orphanages, no church papers and, in many cases, no set hour or place of worship. They meet in homes, in small groups on farms or in factories for prayer, worship, Bible study and mutual encouragement. Pastors and bishops live, not in luxurious palaces or monasteries, but in simple, oft-times nearly bare apartments or barracks with their people. Most—like Paul—have taken up work as farmers, accountants, teachers, miners, or repairmen for their livelihood. Children receive their religious instruction in the home. Parents teach and learn with them. There is no question of power politics or world-shaking resolutions. But these Christians are converting jailers, students, labourers and political leaders. They have a fearless kind of boldness which confounds magistrates and challenges youth. In a day of disillusionment with political regimes, there may be added to them a great many souls."

The Church in Communist China

For us of the Indian Church the most helpful illustration of these developments is the recent history of the Church in China. It shows, on the one hand, how in an Asian country the new Communist State is dealing with the Christian community and, on the other hand, it describes how the Chinese Church is itself shaken out of its context in the old order of society and is facing the dangers and opportunities involved in the process of redefining its structure, life and witness.

Christianity in China dates back several centuries to the time when Roman Catholic missionaries first came to the country. More than one half of China's approximately four million Christians are members of this Church. The first Protestant missionary came to China in 1807, and after 1842 several British and American missions started work. In 1927 the Church of Christ in China was formed, uniting sixteen different missionary churches. The Chinese Church has been noted for its strong and independent leadership. By 1927 all of the chief administrative posts were in Chinese hands. At the International Missionary Conference held at Madras in 1938 the Chinese delegation was recognized as the ablest of the national groups.

Christianity's relations with Communism in China began in the early 1920's. In 1923 Dr. Sun Yat Sen, himself a Christian, asked Russia for help in organizing the country. The Russians sent a group of advisers and military instructors headed by Michael Borodin, a man of outstanding ability. Under his leadership an anti-British and anti-Christian movement was launched, and for the next few years the Church passed through opposition and persecution. Christian schools and hospitals were forcibly closed down, Church services were rudely interrupted, and some Christians were killed. People were told that if they wished to be loyal Chinese they must sever their connection with this foreign religion. The attack was stopped when the Chinese nationalists, under Chiang Kai-shek, broke with the Communists. But it brought about much heart-searching among the Christians. There was an insistent demand for Chinese leadership in the Church and soon all chief administrative posts in schools, hospitals and other church organizations were in Chinese hands. In 1930 a Five-Year Movement was launched with the slogan "Lord, revive Thy Church; and let it begin with me!"

For the next fifteen years China was involved in the struggle against Japan. At the close of the war the country had in effect two rival governments—the Nationalists, with their capital at Nanking, and the Communists who controlled large parts of western and northern China. In the Communist-held territories there was a good deal of open persecution of the Christians. But this policy was modified somewhat as the Communists sought to win the sympathy and control of the entire country. They proclaimed religious freedom and toleration for all, and their actions often appeared to bear this out. In 1948, when they captured Tsinan, a missionary reported that there was no molestation of foreign or Chinese Christians, that schools and hospitals were permitted to carry on, that the theological college was still functioning, and that at Christmas students from the Communist schools came to watch the Nativity play. Similar reports came from several cities. But from other areas came news of persecution and even of the murder of Christians. The worst sufferers during this period were Roman Catholics, largely because the Roman Church had taken a strong line of opposition to Communism, and its adherents were regarded as political enemies.

On October 1, 1949, the People's Government of China was formally inaugurated in Peking. Theoretically this was a coalition government, but in fact the real power lay in the hands of a small self-appointed committee of Communist leaders. This group convened a People's Consultative Conference which was to meet twice each year as an advisory body to the government. On the P.P.C.C. were five representatives of the non-Roman churches. These representatives, however, were selected by the government, not elected by the churches. The P.P.C.C. approved a "Common Political Platform," one clause of which guaranteed "freedom of religious belief" to "the people" (*i.e.*, to those with full citizenship rights).

Many Chinese Christians were glad to see the new government come into power and were eager to co-operate with it. They were tired of years of devastating civil war. Also, the new regime put into effect many badly-needed reforms. Opium smoking, prostitution and gambling were largely abolished, and the currency was quickly stabilized. Because of such changes Dr. T. C. Chao, a leading theologian and one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches, wrote a widely-published article entitled "Days of Rejoicing in China." In September 1950 a group of leaders issued a "Christian Manifesto" which was then signed by tens of thousands of Christians and adopted as the official policy of the National Christian Council. This Manifesto said, "Christian Churches and organizations in China should give thorough-going support to the Common Political Platform and under the leadership of the government oppose imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism and take part in the effort to build an independent, democratic, peaceable, unified, prosperous and powerful New China." The entire Manifesto was clearly political for it made only a slight attempt to state the task of the churches other than by urging them to obey the new regime. Three of those who prepared it were delegates to the P.P.C.C., and a draft of the Manifesto was shown to the government before it was approved by any Christian group. During the campaign for signatures the government made it clear that it regarded the Manifesto as a test of loyalty among Christians. Many Christians in places of responsibility signed in order to protect their institutions. Many also signed in order to cleanse themselves of the stigma of

foreign domination and identification with interests in the "Imperialistic" world. At the same time, many refused to sign despite all pressure. The bishops of the Anglican Communion in China issued a manifesto of their own which clearly opposed imperialism, feudalism and exploitation, but granted nothing to Communist politics and propaganda.

One feature of the new regime was an intensive drive to indoctrinate all persons in the theory of Communism. Such indoctrination included study classes in Marxism-Leninism, confessional meetings where each person was required to denounce his own sins against "the people" and instruction in the current programme of the Party. Church workers and others were forced to give at least three four-hour periods per week to such political studies. Among students and other young people an organized attempt was made to discredit all religious belief. One such effort is described by a person who took part in a study group:

> In one Christian school a month of political training under government direction was ordered for all students. This began with the "scientific" attack on religion, especially the Christian doctrine of creation. The government felt confident that the Christian orientation of the school could be overthrown by this process. Already Bible study had been eliminated from the curriculum and few students were seen at daily prayers. The result, however, was the opposite. Students who fully shared the Communist idealism suddenly became conscious that something precious to them was being attacked. They organized theological and Bible Study groups. They met each morning for prayer, in spite of ridicule from the "New Democratic" youth. And out of this they developed a living theological answer to the Communism they knew.

Many Christians believed that the new government would respect the social service institutions such as schools and hospitals. This proved to be a vain hope, based on a serious misunderstanding of Communism, for the institutions were the first to be subjected to government pressure. Recent reports state that most of the hospitals have been nationalised. The thirteen Christian universities have lost their identity, not only by a change of name, but by being broken up and amalgamated with

other institutions. The Catholic University in Peking has been abolished by an official order of the Department of Education. Most of the Christian middle schools continue under Boards of Directors chosen by the government.

Christian institutions have also come under heavy attack during the vast anti-corruption campaign which was launched by the government early in 1952. When the People's Republic was first established, many observers said that the new regime had eliminated graft and corruption. However, old ways die hard, and apparently not only merchants and manufacturers but also highly-placed party members bided their time to resume old practices. The government decided that the time had come for a thorough house-cleaning. Its first move was against party members and officials and was called the 3-Anti Movement (Anti-corruption, Anti-waste, Anti-bureaucracy). When this campaign had been well launched, another was begun. This was called the 5-Anti Movement (Anti-bribery, Anti-tax-evasion, Anti-cheating, Anti-theft-of-state-property, Anti-theft-of-state-economic-information) and was directed primarily against the merchant class. In connection with these movements practically everyone who has had occasion to handle funds in Christian institutions, particularly in schools and hospitals, has come under scrutiny. The grim aspect of this is that once a person has been accused he has to confess to something on the theory that everyone has faults and no one can masquerade as innocent. Some victims try to allay suspicion by the confession of some indiscretions. Once these minor faults are admitted, they are made the basis for more serious charges of callous unconcern for the people's interest. Mass trials are held and conviction follows with heavy penalties. In most cases those accused are not permitted to make a defence.

The outbreak of war in Korea brought about increased pressure on the churches to dissociate themselves from all foreign influence. In April 1951 the government called three conferences at Peking—one on Christian schools and colleges, another on Christian publishing agencies, and a third on the Protestant Churches as a whole. The government used these opportunities to illustrate ways in which "imperialism" had hitherto been rampant within the churches and to insist that Christians themselves publicly admit the truth of such

accusations. The third conference issued a statement which declared renewed opposition to American imperialism, to the use of atomic weapons and to the rearming of Japan and Western Germany. It also proclaimed thanks and enthusiastic support to the government. "We are confident," the statement reads, "that Chinese Christians in reliance upon God, and under the bold and enlightened leadership of Chairman Mao, with the encouragement and aid of the government, can establish Christian work which will be better, purer, and more able to serve the people." The statement concludes by saying that all local churches, Christian organizations and Christian publications must be enlisted in active participation in the "Resist America and Aid Korea Movement."

Following the conference of Christian publishers plans were made for purging all Christian literature of every sort of "imperialistic" influence. Publishing agencies were asked to destroy stocks of books, and schools and seminaries were asked to remove from their libraries books that were guilty of any of a series of charges. Among these charges were the following: author a recognised traitor; direct or indirect opposition to Communism, Soviet Russia, or the People's Government; expressions of the imperialistic, capitalistic point of view; one-sided expressions of internationalism that harm the patriotic spirit; any imperialistic expression of the ecumenical Church which does not distinguish between friend and foe; any writing that expresses doubt of the Oppose-America, Help-Korea principle. In keeping with this policy more than 80% of the books published by the Christian Literature Society have been banned and destroyed. Universities and schools have been similarly purged. More than 120,000 of the 140,000 volumes in the library of St. John's University at Shanghai were reprocessed and the paper used for government propaganda.

Another result of these conferences was the vigorous promotion of a nation-wide "Accusation Movement." Each religious organization and every local church was told that its major duty was to make a success of this movement. The direction was in the hands of a government-sponsored group called "The Resist-America, Aid-Korea, and Three-Self Reform Movement Committee" (generally known as the Three-Selves Committee). Some of these accusations have been published in *Hsieh Chin*,

the monthly bulletin of the National Christian Council of China. One of these was that made by Lu Yao Hua, only daughter of Lu Chih Wei, former President of Yenching University, against her father. Her accusation reads in part as follows:

> In the past I regarded you as an honoured example. Once I told you that there were 17 million unemployed in America. You replied that I could be mistaken, thereby creating in me a doubt as to the truth of the people's daily newspapers.... I sat on the platform with you during your confession, thinking that I could help you and assuming that your confession would be sincere. My heart was heavy as I saw the 900 adverse votes. I thought the masses had been too severe.... The following day the school paper raised many factual questions....I then saw that you were not my respected father.... My classmates have answered your devilish confession with facts.. I have joined the youth group. My previous political instability was due to my following you. I have been affected by the father-daughter relationship. If that relationship is proper, then the great relationship with the masses is a deception. Communists tolerate no "respect America" thinking. Even as the volunteers in Korea, why should I not fight you rather than protect and plead for you? Your false tears will no longer bribe my conscience.

The effect of these developments is summarized in a recent report. "It is inevitable," says the correspondent, "that the Chinese Church, at least in the foreseeable future, will be cut off almost completely from any contact with the outside world. From a Chinese point of view the ecumenical movement appears to be almost exclusively Western, and as a result all contacts with it are suspect. These developments plus the complete censorship of the press, the fact that listening to the Voice of America broadcasts is considered treason, and the increasing censorship of correspondence, effectively cuts off Chinese Christians and the Chinese Church from contacts with fellow Christians and churches abroad."

What is the response of Christian leaders to this growing pressure? Many are still willing, at least in public statements and actions, to support the new regime. Church administration is dominated by the Three-Selves Committee, which has its

headquarters in Shanghai with regional representatives in other cities. This Committee is composed of men and women who have given unquestioning and apparently enthusiastic support to the government. What their inner feelings are we cannot tell. There is no need to question their sincerity. But we know that for many others the situation has become completely intolerable. Some have dared to proclaim their convictions with the sure knowledge that their end would be imprisonment or death. The trial of one such man continued over a period of three weeks. He met the charges at the first trial by preaching a sermon instead of making a confession. When he was brought out for final trial, he again refused to recant or to confess guilt of the charges of which he was innocent. At another place a young minister and the former principal of a girls' school both expressed themselves courageously and were condemned to hard labour for life.

One of the most revealing cases is that of Dr. T. C. Chao, former Dean of the Yenching School of Religion. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Chao in 1949 praised the new regime and was one of the authors of the "Christian Manifesto." In 1951 he resigned from the presidency of the World Council of Churches because that organization publicly supported the United Nations action in Korea. But early in 1952, during the Accusation Movement at Yenching University, he was accused of "carrying out American imperialism's aggressive policies under the cloak of religion." In reply to this charge he read a self-criticism paper before his university colleagues. This was rejected on the grounds that he did not fully admit his guilt of having caused the churches "to take a passive attitude towards the Oppose-America Aid-Korea Movement and did not contribute to it nor to the patriotic campaign." Following this Dr. Chao presented another self-criticism paper, but this also was rejected. The reasons were given in the June 1952 issue of *Hsieh Chin* which said that Dr. Chao persisted in maintaining the following principles: "universal love," "ecumenism" and "the independence of the Christian from popular ideology." He was also criticized for having written that "religion transcends nationality and race." He was dismissed from his post at Yenching, deprived of his position as a minister in the Chinese Church, and placed under house arrest.

Despite such accusations and trials the Church in China is

still able to hold services of worship. A recent report says that "in Shanghai church attendance is good, especially so where pastors preach Gospel sermons. Where they try to blend a good deal of politics with their preaching, congregations tend to drop off. It seems intolerable to some that the pervading political pressures should be manifested even in divine worship. There is no interference with Protestant church services. This freedom to worship is, however, the only freedom the Church enjoys." Another report says, "A year or two ago the feeling was expressed that soon pressures would slacken and the churches would have a better time. I do not think that such opinions are common now. The expectation is for one pressure after another, one campaign after another, with further testing of the reality of the Christian faith."

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE COMMUNIST

THE most striking fact which arrests attention when we consider the Communist attitude towards the Church is the radical difference between the Communist and the Christian view in regard to the nature and destiny of man. Because this difference is fundamental, there is no possible way of reconciling the Christian understanding of human nature and the Christian belief in the hope of the Kingdom of God with the Communist expectation of the classless society as man's inevitable destiny.

The supreme concern of Communism is this final perfection of humanity in a classless society. Everything else is subordinated and somehow brought to serve this end. But then, in focussing attention on man, Communism centres it always on the masses, and not on individual people. The consequence is that the worth of each person as an individual is completely ignored, for Communism reckons with humanity in the bulk. In fact, its view of morality and its atheism are based on this conception of the mass man.

The Communist hope is that the classless society will be eventually achieved by eliminating the evil of private property and by eradicating the oppressive bourgeois. That done, all people on earth would come together in happy and helpful co-operation. The ideal society, the kingdom of heaven on earth, will then be realized.

It is this easy optimism characteristic of the Communist estimate of man and of human nature that the Christian cannot accept. For such a claim does not reckon with man's innate tendency to evil. Christians hold, on the contrary, that all men are sinners and that all men stand in need of redemption, both from the power and guilt of sinfulness.

But what has this theological concept of sin to do with political theory? Is not sin really what affects man's religious relationship with God? What can "sin" and "sinfulness" have to do with man's political behaviour in our modern world? To

the Christian these are very important questions. When we say that man is a "sinner" we mean that: (1) Man is naturally selfish and prefers the interests that are close to himself and to his own social group. Therefore, when he talks of "freedom" and of "human rights," he is apt to visualize these political concepts in a narrow, self-centred way. (2) Man has a natural tendency to maintain his own security by means of power over all who may threaten it, and he likes to exercise power to further his own ends so that he may be in a position to compare himself with others to their disadvantage. Now, power is a political device, and it has been well said that "Power corrupts; and absolute power corrupts absolutely." (3) Man has a natural tendency to be self-sufficient, to deny in effect his dependence on others and to set up some group or system or ideal of his own at the expense of others. Exploitation is another concept in contemporary political thinking which has direct bearings on human nature as we have described it.

Two things follow from this Christian conception of the sinful nature of man. One is that man should always bear in mind that self-centredness and pride enter into all human motives and standards; they corrupt all social relationships and social institutions. We are made aware of the depth of our degradation in terms of the perfection which we meet in Jesus Christ. The other thing is that in Jesus Christ we also find hope, hope for ourselves as individuals, and hope for humanity as a whole. Therefore, the Christian view of human nature neither accepts the extreme of shallow optimism that is based on belief in man's innate power to save himself, nor does it accept the bleak pessimistic view that man, helpless and forlorn, is doomed to perish. We hold that man never ceases to be the kind of being who can be renewed by the grace of God to be what he was meant to be, capable of responding to God's love, His standards of right and wrong, His will for the world.

It is at this point that the significance of the Gospel we believe stands out in vivid contrast to the Communist programme for political action. Communist politics is based on the assumption that man is a function of a collective (class) and that politics is a matter of historical necessity. In relation to contemporary political life, the Christian responsibility is to affirm: (1) the fundamental right of individual man to follow his reason

and conscience, (2) the corruptible nature of power (which does not mean mere violence) and the need for self-criticism and safeguards in the exercise of it, and (3) constant need of change in the direction of greater social justice. These are political affirmations that arise out of our Christian faith. This is not to say that we identify the gospel with any one political system or another, but that we must work for a political system informed by these insights of the Christian faith.

The Christian as Communist

It is our conviction that under no circumstance a Christian can be a Communist. We hold that it is not possible for any one to remain a Christian and be either a Party member or a "fellow traveller." We say this for the following reasons:

(1) Communism repudiates religion as a deterrent to social progress. All Communist leaders, beginning with Marx, have emphatically stated that religion is the enemy of the social revolution. According to them religion is a clever invention of the bourgeois mind to keep the proletariat in subjection, reconciling them to their lot through pious platitudes, and thus preventing the class struggle from breaking out into a revolution that will overthrow the ruling classes. Therefore, in order to push the class-struggle to its conclusive victory all religion must be wiped out of existence. This belief is basic to Communist theory. But in practice, however, an attempt is made to make generous concession to the religious predilection of the working class in the earlier stages of winning them over to the Communist point of view by saying as little as possible about the anti-religious aspect of its ideology.

(2) Communism claims to be itself a religion. The final phase in the development of Communism is decidedly in the direction of making out of it a "substitute religion." The following are some obvious indications of this curious transformation: (i) the veneration of Marx and Engels, of Lenin and Stalin, as "saints" of Communism, to whom all Party members offer absolute homage, (ii) the supreme regard in which the writings of these men are held as "authoritative" scriptures, (iii) the attempts to mould the entire culture and education of the "people's democracies", the arts, the sciences, the morals as well as their economy to accord with its "dialectical materialist"

philosophy, (iv) the organization of the Party to be controlled by an authoritative group of leaders, corresponding to a religious hierarchy. Viewed from this stand-point the term "party" is misleading as a description of the Communist organization, because the functions of Party membership go far beyond what we call politics. The party member is the zealous advocate and the enthusiastic exponent of a distinctive way of thought and life. His devotion to the party is more like that of the fanatic votary of a religious persuasion, not that of a member of a political organization. The most regrettable characteristic of this "religion" is its self-righteousness. The Communist thinks of himself, at least of his party, as the judge of all other men, even of his own unregenerate self! What we are told about the so-called self-criticism of the Communist Party would seem to show that it always ends in the repudiation of all opinion at variance with the Party line, resulting in either self-condemnation or pious accusation of others, for party disloyalty.

(3) Communism claims one's total allegiance. Communism claims for itself the same right of subjecting everything in life to its judgment that the Christian claims for Christ. This raises a crucial point of conflicting loyalties. It may be that in the earlier stages of Communist control a certain amount of freedom is given to Christian people in the limited realm of "spiritual" concerns which is deliberately overlooked by a Communist regime as in some ways beyond its purview. But sooner or later it comes about that there also Communist standards are eventually made to prevail. Our Lord's warning is as true now of our times as it was when first spoken in first century Palestine: "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." How else can one resolve the conflict created by two rival claims to one's *total* allegiance?

The Christian must not forget that his religion concerns the *whole* of life. There is no area of human experience to which it is not related. It may be true that religion has been narrowly confined to acts of worship, to certain spheres of human relationship, to the realm of the "spiritual" as differentiated from that of the "secular." This is so because many good Christians have not understood the true significance of their faith as total commitment of all that concerns their individual and collective

life to the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. Politics and economics are also subject to His standards, His control, His judgment. Of course, this does not mean that at any time in history there is one system of political organization and social order which may be found acceptable to all Christians as wholly in accordance with their faith; it means, rather, that all systems of political organization and social order are to be judged by Christian standards, and corrected from time to time by Christian conscience, so that "the kingdoms of the world" are all brought under the sovereign sway of the Kingdom of Christ. Unless the Christian can have this right of political judgment he cannot be a member of any political party. It is not only the right of worship and freedom of opinion on matters restricted to "religious belief," but freedom to bring to bear the judgment of his faith on everything that relates to life, including politics and economics. He will not have this right as a member of the Communist Party.

Co-operating with Communists

Communist friends keep suggesting that as members of the Communist Party we would have no difficulty in holding fast to our religion. Indeed, they tell us, there are some good Christians, here in this country and elsewhere, who have accepted the Communist political philosophy and found it reconcilable with their religious belief.

What the Communist really means by this statement is that one can keep these two things in two different compartments of one's life, so that the one is not allowed to interfere with the other. "By all means read your Bible, say your prayers, and join your fellow Christians in worship," Communist friends tell us, "but remember that all these things do not have any bearing on your political programme of action and your social ideal of a classless society. Religion is a private matter. It has no relevancy for life in the here and now. Communism, on the other hand, concerns matters which relate to problems of every-day life, both of the individual and of society. It points to the goal towards which world-life is moving, and it gives you a definite plan of action to realize that end. It is, therefore, unwise to mix up politics and religion; the part of wisdom is to keep them separate."

On the face of it this argument of the Communist seems convincing, especially when he goes on to make the claim that Communism is a science subject to its own laws, and that it is not to be evaluated in terms of religious criteria. But on closer examination, especially in the light of the experience of Christians in Communist lands, the entire argument breaks down completely. It is really part of the Communist strategy to inveigle the unwary into taking an initial false step which will eventually lead to the belief that religion is not only irrelevant but also unnecessary, that religion is not only to be tolerated as a failing of the weak-minded but something that should be stamped out as a danger to the Communist society.

If political co-operation with Communists is wrong for the Christian in the present situation, what about co-operation in certain specific projects of a humanitarian character, such as neighbourhood service directed to limited social objectives? A question like that is not easily answered one way or the other. No individual Christian who feels an urge to offer his assistance in such a situation can be peremptorily forbidden from so doing. But he should be warned that he is taking a grave risk. For, in the Communist programme, humanitarian projects do not stand isolated. They are part of a total programme which is both political and ideological. If, for instance, the Communists propose to build a playground in your neighbourhood and seek your co-operation in the project, more often than not the whole idea is planned as the thin end of a wedge. It may be that the project is necessary and worthwhile; but in agreeing to join hands we must secure and safeguard the assurance from our Communist friends that the playground will not be exploited for political ends or purposes of ideological propaganda. And Christians, on their part, should safeguard their political convictions and religious faith by maintaining close association with those of similar political persuasion and by strengthening their bonds of fellowship with other believing Christians. It is further advisable not to venture alone on such co-operative efforts but always with others of his own political philosophy and religious views. The lone Christian who decides to travel only one humanitarian mile with the Communist may find himself continuing the journey to the second political mile and the third ideological mile!

Communist--Christian dialogue

The whole issue takes on a different turn as we come to the close of this discussion. It is true that the Christian cannot be a Communist without ceasing to be a Christian; it is no less true that he will be less a Christian if he ceases to take a Christian concern in the Communist as a social revolutionary, a fellow man, and brother for whom also Christ died. For the Christian is first and foremost an evangelist. He should therefore maintain a continuous religious conversation with the Communist on the Christian faith. This involves a three-fold evangelistic approach which should seek to meet the Communist at the three levels of relationship we shall find ourselves confronting him. On the plane of politics we oppose him in the name of a more adequate alternative, it is true. But in that very protest we should be engaged in a dialogue with the Communist seeking to make clear the relevance of the Christian doctrine of sin and of forgiveness. This possibility of communicating the Gospel in the very act of resisting the claims of Communism is not sufficiently recognized by Christian evangelists. But the Communist is not only an adversary who belongs to an opposite political camp, he is a fellow man. We should meet him on that plane as well. Like any other man, he too has a hunger for friendship and love; he has desires and longings like most men for home and family; he has his problems of faith too; and undoubtedly he has hopes and fears that transcend his Communism. And very often the Communist knows that these aspects of his personal life cannot be understood by his comrades in the Party. The witness of those who had to come out of the Party on this score mainly, as pointed out elsewhere, confirms this. Is it not, then, our Christian duty to extend to these fellowmen that companionship, trust and understanding of which they stand in need? Through such pastoral ministry of Christian fellowship we can transmit the message of the Gospel. Like the Communists themselves, we too quite frequently judge a man by his politics and shut him out. Because of this Pharisaic attitude of Christians as individuals and as groups, and of Churches, Communists, even when disillusioned about Communism, prefer to stay on in the Party because they find no way of entering into a new fellowship. It is here that the Churches must change, and change radically.

One thing more needs to be said. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that we know all the answers. For we too share in the same perplexities that confront all men in this confused generation. There is a solidarity in all this common struggle in the quest for the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one who has not himself gone through it knows the agony of doubt and distress which is the portion of those grappling with the problems of life in the modern world. Only he would know what it is to be met by the Christ who too is Himself in the very thick of it. Such a Christian alone can understand the Gospel for today and can claim the right to bring others to Him.

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNIST CHALLENGE

It is clear that our duty as individual Christians lies in resisting Communism and supporting instead other forces working towards a democratic social revolution. This we do with no "communal" bias but as citizens concerned in the welfare of our country. To this end we operate through the secular (but not anti-religious) political and social organizations along with other men of good will who share objectives similar to ours. But the Christian's devotion to these objectives will have a foundation in his faith; and his motive in working for them will ultimately be religious, and not merely political.

What now are the religious convictions and resources common to all Christians whatever their political opinion or party affiliation, that provide them with a dynamic for political action? What is the task of the Church as the Church, apart from the role of individual Christians, in this realm? These are some of the questions we propose to answer in this chapter. And in this connection, we shall deal with the Communist challenge to the Church and the points at which the Church can and ought to make response to that challenge.

The Church's Entanglement

The Church in India, for historical reasons, is too much entangled with the old order of society. The Communist criticism that the Church is no more than an appendage of vested interests has a great deal of truth in it. We must be willing to accept it as the starting point of a movement of reform within the Church.

Large sections of Christians in India, indeed the vast majority, consist of very poor people. The Church deserves credit for its work among the low castes and the outcastes. But it must be recognized that the Church in India has failed to get rid of caste even within the Church. In certain areas, the Church is very much identified with caste-respectability (*e.g.*,

Syrian Christians), and in many places, caste is very much a part of the life and practice of the Christian community. Caste has deep religious, cultural, social and economic roots; they are not easily dislodged from the soil of everyday life; and it needs a many-pronged approach to root it out. One of the greatest challenges presented by the casteless character of Communism to the Christian Church in India is to manifest the new creation in Christ which knows neither high caste nor low caste.

Moreover, the Church in India (excepting perhaps the Syrians) has grown in a context of imperialism which has weakened its witness. Roman Catholicism was associated in India with the Portuguese, and the Protestant missions with the British. This has meant in the past that Indian Christians shared a great deal of the political attitudes of the foreign imperial power. They were not unreasonably suspected as agents of imperialism. The identification of Christians with the struggle for national independence, however, exonerated them of this particular charge. But the criticism now is that the Churches have become opportunist supporters of the Congress, because it is the ruling party in India. This charge has sufficient truth in it to sting. There is, of course, a possibility that despite its slackening the Congress can be pulled up. But for that the Church should exercise its responsibility of courageous and constructive criticism of the Congress and Congress Government. Or, as in China, people will identify the Church with the ruling party, and those who are subject to injustice will turn rather to Communism for redress of their grievances. It is also worth suggesting that missionaries (especially American missionaries) who may have some influence on their governments might warn them of the danger of supporting any group in India today merely because it is anti-Communist, without any reference to its positive aims. Nothing could be more dangerous than Christian missions, in the name of anti-communism, trying to persuade the Churches to link up with forces in the country which are interested in the maintenance of the *status quo*.

The days of the Church's alliance with foreign power and interests are fortunately over. But the Churches, in so far as they have not become rooted in the cultural soil of India, can be justly criticised as agents of Western cultural imperialism. This criticism again cannot be altogether avoided. Even Nehru,

the most representative modern Indian, is criticised, both by Hindu revivalists and Communists, because he advocates democracy which is a Western concept! But leaving aside these unjust accusations, there is still truth in such criticism regarding the Church, in so far as it does not seek to become "indigenous," not to the old India, but to the new India, striving for a cultural reintegration. The question is whether the Church is relevant to the cultural re-integration of the country at this time. From this angle, the need for greatly increasing Indian leadership as soon as possible, and working on more effective means of self-support must be recognized. Further, Churches and missions in so far as they have to depend on foreign, especially American assistance, should be free to be frankly critical of the political and economic objectives of the U.S.A. in her international relations. Unless the Church is truly Indian in political, social and economic outlook, there is the danger of missions and Churches becoming "the shadow" of American politics in India.

Not that the Church should be subservient to nationalism. The Church is to be ecumenical. Ecumenism is a great corrective to the Church, preventing its becoming subservient to any national politics or ideology. After all, the Church is the one permanent and true *International,* and only as this is increasingly realized, and movements towards union for inter-racial and international co-operation develop can the Church counter the partial, but attractive, internationalism of the Communists. The greatest weakness of Communists, as also their strength, lies in their relation to the Soviet Union, but this internationalism only too easily degenerates into a subtle kind of imperialism. The Christian International must prove that it does not tie the Church in any way to the secular divisions and powers of our times. Christians in Asia can, in this way, make a significant contribution to the ecumenical movement. It is only when the Church recognizes its involvement in the vested interests of society and repents of it, that it can become the vehicle of the eternal gospel.

The Gospel for the Whole Man

Communism challenges the Church to preach the *whole* gospel to the *whole* man. The criticism that religion is an opiate of the people has truth in it. The Church too often has made of

its gospel a Sunday-religion, which has nothing to do with the work-a-day world between Monday and Saturday. It has compartmentalized life into the "religious" and "secular" and has withdrawn from secular concerns. And now the totalitarian movements proclaim a message for the total man; for body, mind and spirit, for individual and society. Modern men longing for a total view of life turn to these new pagan gospels with eager expectancy.

Is this not a judgment on the Church's lopsided presentation of the gospel? The Pietist represents a one-sided Christianity; so does the advocate of the social gospel. There is only one gospel, and it is profoundly social and personal. The Christian faith is in God as the Creator, Judge and Redeemer of man, his society and his history. The gospel offers redemption to the whole man, and all his relationships in society. Not only the individual man but his environment, and all the forces of history, are under the power of Christ, our Judge and Redeemer. Both sin and salvation are concerned with the totality of man's being, man's relationships. The challenge of Communism to the Indian Church is to emphasize the personal and the social implications of the gospel clearly in its preaching, teaching and action.

Indian Christians should take more seriously to the study of the Bible, and giving the Old Testament also its due place, understand what it has to say about social justice. Particularly for a country like India which has experienced a political liberation and is dealing with the laws necessary for making that liberation real to the people, the Law and the Prophets, and their fulfilment in Christ, have a message of far-reaching significance.

The Hebrews had learned by experience in Egypt the misery of inequality and political enslavement, when a people are at the mercy of those who have the power to do what they like with them. They were, therefore, ready to understand the will of the God who by the hand of Moses ("the first strike leader in history") had led them out of this horror, and made a covenant with them from which emanated the first code of Laws. The Law was not a burden but an expression of justice, and an aid against the destructive impulses within men's hearts.

The social structure of the ancient world gave an inferior status to women and to certain groups within society, and it

accepted slavery. God's revelation did not shatter this structure but it released afresh moral forces which were to lead to a new society. The most revolutionary principle the Covenant introduced into Hebrew thinking was that men are morally responsible persons, responsible to the law of God in their relationships with one another. Neither the individual nor the collective was a law unto itself. The rights and responsibilities of man find a basis in the Covenant of God.

The law also had some remarkable provisions for safeguarding the position of the peasant. The agrarian policy of the Jews was based on the theory that God is the only landlord, the only owner of the soil. The Law aimed at securing to every citizen access to the land, that is, in modern terms, to the means of production, by protecting it from private speculation, and administering it as communal property. Hebrew legislators saw clearly that personal freedom depended on the inalienability of land from the tiller. Hence the prohibition of usury, laws of the landmark and laws against land-grabbing. To prevent inequality in land-tenure becoming permanently fixed we find the laws of the "seventh-year fallow," and of the Jubilee. To quote Dummelow, "A remarkable social law putting a check upon ambition and covetousness, preventing the acquisition of huge estates and adjusting the distribution of wealth."

Of course, there was frequent violation of the spirit of the law, by those in power as well as by the people. Then arose the Prophets, champions of the poor and the oppressed, recalling Israel to God and His justice. They proclaimed judgment, and asked for repentance and the fruits of repentance. The Church in our days has to recapture this prophetic tradition. The Prophets mix the material and the spiritual, and do not divorce the religious from political or personal from public morality. Elijah defended the rights of a peasant against the King, and Elisha helped to overthrow an unjust dynasty. Amos thundered against established religion and its alliance with oppressors; Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, strong critics of society and politics, are all in the same tradition. There is not a single prophet who does not show a concern for public affairs and, even the most individualistic of them, Jeremiah, suffered for taking the unpopular side in national politics. The prophets became increasingly international in outlook and recognized God work-

ing not only through Israel but through all the nations of the world.

Jesus said that He came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He preached good news to the poor, "the acceptable year" of Jubilee. It is quite clear that the social teaching of Jesus and the social implications of the gospel cannot be understood apart from the social content of the tradition of the Law and Prophets. This tradition is the rich heritage of the Church and we must recapture it in these revolutionary times.

The Christian Concept of Man

Communism challenges the Church's ethical and philosophical assumptions. In fact, it was Communism that first challenged the identification of Christianity with moral idealism, the belief that human perfection can be realised through the pursuit of moral ideals. It has challenged the Church to a new depth of awareness of sin if it accepts the Communist insistence on the fact of the exploitation of the weak by the strong. On the other hand, we may point out that the Communist wrath against injustice is deprived of its proper ground, which is belief in a God of justice. Is it not because man is made in the image of God, that he is a spiritual being, that it is wrong to exploit him? There is in the gospel a more compelling basis for social justice than in Communism. Indeed the Communists' criticism of the Church's unconcern for social justice carries more weight! But the Christian doctrine of man asserts both his creative and spiritual nature, and his creaturely and sinful nature. This is to recognize necessity of politics for justice, and of its limitations at the same time. Without this tension the Communist falls into self-righteousness and turns cruel.

The Church is called upon to develop a social philosophy based on its deeper understanding of man and his nature, as a sinner redeemed by Christ. Materialism, Idealism and Moralism have proved their inadequacy to provide a basis for the new order and a programme of action to realize it. In fact Democracy dissociated from its Christian roots has become weak and ready to break down in the face of totalitarianism; and the challenge of our times for the Church is to redefine democracy in the light of Christian faith and its realistic estimate of man.

The development of a Christian social doctrine that comprehends the total dimension of man and society is of the utmost importance, not only to Christians but also non-Christians, who are largely searching for an adequate social philosophy.

This, however, needs a far greater intellectual vitality than exists today in the Church in India. As it is, many Christians fail to see the challenge of humanism and modern science. They little realize that Communism is in the tradition of humanism and science run loose from the discipline of the Christian gospel, which in reality is their parent. So that, in the long run, Communism cannot be answered except by a fully Christian, and, therefore, an integral humanism. The Lucknow Ecumenical Study Conference (January 1953) rightly declared that "in the collapse and disintegration of the cultural patterns of the countries of East Asia, the Christian Church has a task to provide a principle of redefinition which makes possible the reintegration and development of a cultural basis conducive to responsible living. In this connection the Christian understanding of man has great relevance to East Asia."

Community-life

Ultimately, however, it is not on the philosophical plane that the challenge to Communism becomes most real. Communism is a challenge to the Church to a richer expression of community. Communism appeals to the man thrown into the battle of life in a hostile world, because it brings him a sense of belonging to a group in which he has a part to play. It is certainly a counterfeit communion; but it is a challenge to the Church to manifest the true communion in the spirit. The Church must explore deeply the significance of community, not in the Indian sense of the word as a closed group defined by inter-marriage and largely by birth and certain customs and religious practices, but as an open group, based on a common loyalty to Christ as Lord, ceaselessly working for a richer expression of fellowship in every aspect of life, upward and outward looking. This is what is meant by the rich Christian word *Koinonia*. But it involves a radical transformation of the local congregation, its life and worship; and it means courageously experimenting with new forms of community living in society, like the Christian ashram movement in the context of Indian village life. Christians might

well adopt the "cell" method and organize groups of Christians in villages and factories and other spheres of secular activity, to pray, study and work together, exploring means whereby they might take their part more effectively in the struggle for social justice and learn to relate their social and political task to Bible study and worship.

The Lucknow Study Conference pointed out that "at the different levels of the Church's life in the local parish, in the national and international sphere of the Church's life, there is need to develop techniques and programmes of social service and action which will make a contribution towards humanizing the social and technical revolution which is taking place in all the social groups. This requires rethinking of the nature and structure of the Church's life in a changing society. The Church's aim should be to build up cells of true community-living as a means of humanizing the impersonal relationships of modern large societies. This is necessary to keep the social revolution a servant of social justice. In this respect the local congregation of the Church has a special revolutionary significance in East Asia."

In the rural setting of our parish life in India the best answer to Communism is a comprehensive parish programme. J. Merle Davis, formerly of the International Missionary Council, was the one who suggested this some time ago. "The comprehensive parish programme", he says, "changes the role of the village Church from that of a competing religious temple to that of a Christian service centre about which the life of the community may gather, and which ministers to its many-sided needs." In such an integrated approach, evangelism, teaching, health work, home and family, youth activities, literacy, agriculture—all become parts of one programme, redeeming the life of the rural community.

For it is not only on the level of political or philosophical argument, but on the level of the daily needs, hopes and despairs of the common man, especially his longing for satisfying community, that Communism or Christianity will enter men's hearts. It is only as the local congregation manifests true community that Christianity will prevail over Communism.

One thing more remains to be said in this connection. We made reference earlier in this chapter to the Ecumenical

Movement—the world-wide Christian fellowship which cuts across all barriers of race, culture, caste and class. But this unity of the Body of Christ not only transcends all denominational distinctions, it makes them unnecessary. Our present dividedness as Christian Churches is one great opportunity to the Communist of which he is not slow to take advantage. For it so happens that our present denominational loyalties are, as a matter of fact, somewhat mixed up with vested interests, financial obligation to foreign countries, lingering caste consciousness and class privileges. Not all our denominational divisions are based entirely on theological grounds. They are due in great measure to non-theological factors as well. Therefore, Christians in India would do well to think more seriously on the unity of the Church and work to realize it under the leading of the Holy Spirit so that our Lord's Prayer for us may find fulfilment—"that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

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